

*Thos. Munimer*

A  
*Philosophical, Historical, and Moral*  
E S S A Y  
O N  
O L D M A I D S.

BY  
A FRIEND TO THE SISTERHOOD.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.  
V O L. III.

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THE THIRD EDITION,  
WITH CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS.

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*To unfold the sage  
And serious Doctrine of Virginity.* MILTON'S *Comus*.

Περὶ τῶνδε κορῶν ἐν τοῖς θαλαμοῖς γηρασουσάντων ἀνιῶμαι.  
ARISTOPHANES.

Nemo apud nos, qui idem tentaverit; nemo apud Græcos, qui unus omnia ea tractaverit.—Res ardua, vetustis novitatem dare, novis auctoritatem, obsoletis nitorem, obscuris lucem, fastiditis gratiam, dubiis fidem, omnibus vero naturam, et naturæ suæ omnia. Itaque, etiam non affectis, voluisse, abundè pulchrum atque magnificum est.

PLINII Hist. Nat. Præfatio.

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X

AN  
E S S A Y  
ON  
OLD MAIDS.

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BOOK V.

ON MONASTIC AND OTHER MODERN OLD  
MAIDS.

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CHAP. I.

*Introductory Chapter.*

**C**OURAGE! my dear courteous  
reader! who hast had the patience to  
wander with me through many ages of  
darkness; we shall soon be able to exclaim  
together,

*Hail to the light of modern, modish life!*

And we shall return to the living world,

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B

not

not the worse, I trust, for our adventurous flight across the long desert of monkish superstition; which we may both, perhaps, consider as little better than

*the dreary realm  
Of Chaos old, and sable-vested Night.*

Yet before we attempt to regain the enlightened sphere of refined society, and fashionable manners, let us not disdain to bestow a little attention on those remarkable maidens of the cloister, whose hallowed purity was supposed to invest them with miraculous power: and those still more interesting nuns, who had sufficient energy of mind to illuminate the gloom, that environed them, by a cheerful cultivation of such talents, as are more apt to be extinguished, than kindled, in the obscurity of a convent.

If thou art truly a candid reader, thou wilt not refuse to attend me, while I pay, in a few pages, the respect that we justly owe to some monastic Old Maids:—yet as we proceed, allow me, gentle reader! to say,  
on

on our road, a word or two in my own favour, comparing myself with two worthy predecessors, who have gone before me over this very tender ground of virginity, and with whom I was myself entirely unacquainted, when I first bestowed on the community of ancient virgins my invaluable lucubrations in their behalf.

These two predecessors of mine were no less personages, than a learned lawyer of Germany, and an elderly accomplished maiden of England: the first, Doctor Kornmannus, published, in 1617, a Latin treatise on the condition of Virgins; drawn, as he tells us in his title, from natural, divine, canon, and civil law; and composed for the instruction and amusement of naturalists, physicians, theologians, and lawyers:—my second predecessor, Sarah Fielding, the worthy sister of our exquisite novelist, published, in 1755, an English periodical paper entitled *The Old Maid*, which was republished in a single volume.

If, peradventure, my gentle reader, thou

B 2

hast



hast ever had occasion to vindicate thyself from an unmerited imputation of rudeness and malevolence, thou wilt readily allow the unknown and mistaken author of this essay to assume an honest pride in observing, that he has infinitely more discretion and delicacy than the learned Doctor Kornmannus, and not less tenderness for the sisterhood than the very amiable spinster Sarah Fielding.

In proof of the first article, I will only inform the society of Maidens, that the profound and over-curious Doctor Kornmannus introduces, in his very serious performance, several chapters, whose bare titles I could not repeat to them without blushing \*. As to the second article, of tenderness for the sisterhood,

\* Let me observe, however, in behalf of my less reserved brother Kornmannus, that in composing his elaborate treatise on Virgins, he appears to have been actuated by a benevolent motive, and to have well understood the subject which he treats; as the learned reader will sufficiently perceive from the following words of his preface:

“ Non

sisterhood, what has the author of this essay, who is sometimes accused of treating his fair clients with sarcastic cruelty, what has he ever said more sarcastic, than the following harmless expression of that pleasant member of their own community, Sarah Fielding, who declares, in the first number of her periodical work, "she is of opinion Old Maids are only mischievous, like monkies, "for want of employment."

But in truth, all general good-humoured pleasantry, or just reproof, pointed against the failings of any community, though they may perhaps at the moment awaken, in some worthy members, a hasty spark of *corporation resentment*, if I may hazard such a phrase, yet never produce, in candid bosoms, any lasting displeasure.

As a pleasing omen of my future success

"Non ardor aliquis aut furor nimius, sed ut  
 "earum pectora exaturemus, et bonam simul gratiam  
 "nobis apud eas conciliemus, maximè cum hoc genus  
 "apprimè irritabile fiet, materiam hancce sumpsi  
 "æquam."

Kornmanni Præfatio, edit. 1654.

in appeasing those good Old Maidens, whom I have undesignedly offended, let me close this chapter by inserting, with the praise it deserves, the following picture of celibacy, drawn by my favourite predecessor, Sarah Fielding; and, if my partiality for this admirable Old Maid does not deceive me, her allegorical tablet is not unworthy of Addison himself.

After describing her visit, in a vision, to the temple of Marriage, and her precipitate retreat from thence, in consequence of the alarm, which the terrific attendants of that divinity excited; she enters the grove consecrated to Celibacy, and proceeds thus in her account of it:

“ If my heart beat with rapture at entering the avenues leading to the temple  
“ of Marriage, those which led to the abode  
“ of this solitary goddess produced a very  
“ contrary effect; the grove was composed  
“ of evergreens, which cast a gloomy and  
“ melancholy shade; the way was rough  
“ and thorny, and covered with plants of  
“ the



“ the most unpleasing aspect ; no flowers  
“ perfumed the air, no feathered warblers  
“ strained their little throats ; the bird of  
“ Pallas whooted from the boughs, and  
“ breaking the solemn silence, cast a damp  
“ upon my heart, which almost tempted  
“ me to return to the deity I had just  
“ rejected : Shame however urged me to  
“ persevere, and with infinite labour I at  
“ length reached the summit of the hill, on  
“ which stood the temple. I entered with  
“ reluctance, which was not lessened by  
“ the appearance of the goddess : she was  
“ seated on a throne of ebony ; her counte-  
“ nance was severe, her complexion pale  
“ and unanimated ; she wore a loose robe  
“ of the purest white, a garland of willow  
“ on her head, and held in her hand a  
“ branch of barren yew : Chastity and  
“ Pride supported her train ; before her  
“ stood Neglect, Contempt, and Derision,  
“ but, as her port was majestic and haughty,  
“ she overlooked them, and kept her eyes  
“ fixed upon a very beautiful personage at

“ her hand; who, from her easy composed  
“ mien, I rightly guessed to be Tranquillity.

“ As I drew nearer, the cloud on the  
“ brow of Celibacy seemed to disperse, and  
“ I could observe in her an air of serenity  
“ which had escaped my observation at a  
“ greater distance; her whole form seemed  
“ more pleasing as I advanced, and I was  
“ already inclining to enlist under her ban-  
“ ners, when, on waving her hand, a youth  
“ approached, lovely as the blush of morn-  
“ ing, and breathing the odours of the  
“ spring: his air was noble and disengaged;  
“ his countenance was flushed with health  
“ and sparkled with vivacity and spirit;  
“ his flowing garments, which fluttered in  
“ the breeze, his careless locks, floating  
“ in wanton ringlets on his shoulders, and  
“ the rod of manumission in his hand, dis-  
“ covered him to be Liberty.

“ I gave him my hand in a transport of  
“ pleasure; and he, with a smile of appro-  
“ bation, delivered me to Peace and Con-  
“ tentment, the constant companions of  
“ his

" his steps, commanding them to lead me  
 " to the temple of Happiness, which stood  
 " at an equal distance from the rival fanes  
 " of Celibacy and Marriage, and received  
 " indiscriminately from both, such as were  
 " introduced by the amiable pair, who  
 " were now my conductors. My joy at  
 " this command was so great as to break  
 " the fetters of sleep, and restore me to old  
 " age and wrinkles.

" However, though my beauty vanished  
 " with my dream, I have the satisfaction of  
 " finding myself *really* accompanied by  
 " peace and contentment; as a proof of  
 " which, I need only remind my readers,  
 " that I am at this time of life, and in a  
 " state generally attended with spleen and  
 " ill-nature, one of the best-humoured crea-  
 " tures breathing; and, instead of gadding  
 " about to vent my spleen upon my innocent  
 " neighbours, and make other people uneasy,  
 " like most of my sisterhood, am, as you see,  
 " very inoffensively blotting paper, and  
 " wearing out my small remains of spirits  
 " and



“and eye-sight in the service, and for the  
 “amusement of my fellow citizens. I  
 “heartily wish, for the peace of society,  
 “every Old Maid in the bills of mortality  
 “was as harmlessly employed!”

The Old Maid, N° 21.

The spirit and benevolence of this admirable spinster, have put me into high good-humour with the sisterhood. I shall now cherish a lively hope, that even the more rigid Old Maids, who frowned on the first appearance of this well-intended essay, may happily smile on a re-perusal of it in this corrected edition; since I have assiduously endeavoured to erase every passage, cited from ancient and modern writers, which I imagined the nicest of my maiden readers could object to, either as dull or indelicate.

*With mutual kindness, justly due,  
 Let us, dear sisterhood, combine!  
 Mild virtues may I fix with you!  
 You make the modest graces mine!*

*The*

## OLD MAIDS.

II

*The world shall by this union gain,  
What worldlings say is rarely seen ;  
An author neither gross nor vain,  
And Old Maids clarified from spleen.*

CHAP.

## CHAP. II.

*On Monastic Virgins, and the Miracles  
ascribed to them.*

THE enthusiastic eloquence of the different saints, whom we have just reviewed, had undoubtedly great influence in augmenting the multitude of religious Old Maids. But it was not the only cause which produced this effect:—to the exhortations of the holy fathers we may add the universal and dazzling idea of supernatural power, supposed to reside in the monastic virgin of immaculate purity. Many females would enter with ambitious zeal into a state which gave them a fair prospect of acquiring the very flattering privilege of working miracles: and in those ages, when diverse miracles were ascribed to the chaste and pious daughters of many a convent, every nun of lively imagination, who had the slightest acquaintance with the legends  
of



of her sisterhood, might readily hope for a privilege of which examples were so common. The lives of the female saints contain an infinitude of miraculous incidents in honour of virginity. My readers would hardly thank me for reviving a large collection of these forgotten wonders; yet let me observe, with the great Montesquieu \*, " that the lyes contained in these lives relate to the manners of the time:" and it forms a part of my design, to exhibit in this work the manners and sentiments of different ages, relating to that interesting condition of female life which I have chosen for my subject. Every author must allow a place to many absurdities, if he means to give a history of human opinions, though on a

\* Je crois bien que c'est une fausseté (says this bold and manly writer, on a passage in the life of an obscure saint) mais c'est une fausseté très-ancienne: le fond de la vie et les mensonges se rapportent aux mœurs et aux loix du temps; et ce sont ces mœurs et ces loix que l'on cherche ici.

L'Esprit des Loix, lib. xxx. chap. 21.

§

single

single topic. The more ridiculous an ancient legend may appear to us, the more forcibly will it shew us the extent and influence of popular credulity. I shall, therefore, select a few supernatural anecdotes of pious virgins; and, to render them the more interesting, I shall confine myself to the holy maidens of our own country. If we wished to produce the strongest example of miraculous power ascribed to martyred chastity, we might pitch on the adventures of St. Ositha, a religious and royal virgin of Essex, who, being murdered and beheaded by Danish pirates, in the ninth century, is said, like some poetical heroes of romance, to have carried her severed head in her own hands to a church at a considerable distance from the spot where she was slain \*.

\* Dani infideles . . . . ipsam sanctam Ositham capite obtruncant: at corpus exangue mox sese subrigit, et caput humi jacens manibus apprehendit; rectoque gradu et firmis vestigiis progrediens usque ad ecclesiam apostolorum sanctorum Petri et Pauli, per tria ferè stadia, illud deportat: quod accidit circa annum 870. Du Monstier, Martyrologium, p. 393.

The memory of this fair and chaste saint was held in peculiar veneration, as appears from a circumstance recorded in one of our early monastic chronicles. Alward, bishop of London, was afflicted with a leprosy, and his distemper was supposed to be a punishment which he drew upon himself, by inspecting this buried virgin, whose body lay within his diocese, with a profane curiosity, and pilfering some reliques from her grave \*.

Among the most meritorious of our holy maidens, we ought, perhaps, to reckon the chaste St. Bridget of Scotland, who, having resolved on perpetual virginity, and being persecuted by the addresses of an ardent lover, prayed to heaven that she might be relieved from his distressing importunities by the sudden loss of her beauty. Her pious

\* Cum virginis martyris corpus ausu temerario inspicere, et aliquas inde reliquias auferre presumeret, divino, ut creditur, iudicio tantæ temeritatis pœnam solvit.

Historia Ramesiensis,

edit. Gale, p. 452.

biographers



biographers inform us, that this singular petition was immediately granted:—her lovely countenance was instantly deformed, and the dangerous lustre of her eyes was drowned in blood. But we have the consolation of being told, by the same authority, that she recovered her charms as soon as her purity was perfectly secure.

Not to dwell on the legends of mere martyrologists, I shall relate, from the most respectable of our ancient historians, a miraculous anecdote, which not only shews the wonderful estimation in which monastic virginity was held, but even proves that the king himself was not safe, if he presumed to question or deride the continence of a canonized virgin.

The celebrated William of Malmshury has enlivened the history of English prelates with the following account of a religious and royal maiden, whose name was Editha. This lady, the daughter of Edgar, a monarch distinguished by his military spirit and his amorous adventures, was early devoted to a  
life

life of monastic purity ; and is said to have displayed all the gentle virtues in the monastery of Wilton. Though a professed nun, she ventured to indulge herself in splendid apparel ; and when reproved by St. Ethelwold for her finery, she defended herself, with a pious vivacity, by a quotation from St. Augustin, affirming that pride was often seen in a sordid habit, and humility in a golden vest. In her devotions she was so fervent, that the great St. Dunstan, who beheld her during the consecration of a church which she had built, was enraptured with her piety. On observing, that she frequently extended her thumb, to make the sign of the cross, this prophetic saint exclaimed, " May that blessed finger never " decay !" and burst into a tender passion of tears, so violent as to shake with his sobbing the deacon who stood next him. On being asked the reason of his disorder, he replied, " This blooming rose will soon " wither ; this dove, so dear to heaven, will " fly away from us in six weeks from this " day."

“ day.” His prophecy was accomplished : the royal virgin expired at the precise time he had foretold ; and the same holy man beheld her in a vision, walking hand in hand with the fainted martyr to whom she had dedicated the church, and commanding that such reverence should be paid to her on earth as she received in heaven.— Miracles became frequent at her tomb\*.

At a subsequent period, when king Ca-

\* The curious reader may wish to see the whole account of this singular apparition, which I have softened and abridged.—Ita crebrescentibus ad tum-  
bam miraculis, edictum ut efferretur virginis corpus ;  
inventumque totum in cineres solutum, præter digi-  
tum et alvum, alvoque subjecta ; unde sancto dubi-  
tanti virgo ipsa per visum assistit : dicens, non mirum  
esse si partes illæ corporis putruerint, quod usus ha-  
beat exanimata corpora in quosdam arcanos naturæ  
sinus defluere, et ipsa utpotè puella membris illis  
peccaverit ; cæterùm ventrem nulla corrumpi justè  
putredine, qui nulla unquam aculeatus sit libidine ;  
immunem se fuisse crapulæ et carnalis copulæ.

Will. Malmf. de Gestis Pontificum,

lib. ii. p. 252.

nute



nute the Dane, who was apt, says the same pious historian, to satyrize the saints of England, happened to visit Wilton, he treated the memory of the chaste and holy Editha with jocular contempt; affirming, that he could never believe she was justly sainted for chastity, as she was the daughter of Edgar, the most wanton of princes. While he spoke thus with the irreverence of a barbarian, he was reprov'd by the archbishop Ednodus. Canute growing angry, orders the sepulchre to be opened, that he might see what appearance of sanctity the dead virgin would discover. The mausoleum being burst asunder, the deceased, spreading her veil before her face as low as her girdle, was seen to arise and attack the insolent monarch \*. Overcome with terror, throwing back his head, and losing the strength of his knees, he fell to the ground,

\* Effracto ergo mausoleo, defuncta, oppanso ante faciem velo cingulo tenus, assurgere, et in contumacem regem impetum facere, visa.

and remained breathless so long, that he was supposed to be dead ; but his faculties returning by degrees, he rejoiced to find that, although severely chastised, he had a season left him for penitence. The festival of the chaste Editha is therefore held venerable in many parts of England ; and no one can think of profaning it with impunity.

Such are the anecdotes which the most sensible and accomplished of our ancient historians has related of one royal and pious maiden. Several incidents of a similar cast might be easily collected ; but I apprehend the preceding is sufficient to shew, in a very strong point of view, the ideas of our ancestors concerning the supernatural powers of a spotless virgin. What real influence such ideas may have had in augmenting the multitude of genuine Old Maids, I shall leave the contemplative sisterhood to consider.

## CHAP. III.

*On the Decline and Fall of Monastic Virginity.*

AGES have existed, in which a passion for monastic chastity appears to have spread, like an epidemical disorder, through the female world, and ladies of the most elevated rank seem to have been particularly exposed to this *religious influenza*. The great historian, who has lately exhibited a magnificent picture of declining Rome, delineates, with his usual spirit, the pious pomp and ostentation, with which the three daughters of the emperor Arcadius dedicated their virginity to God. He informs us, that “the obligation of their  
“vow was inscribed on a tablet of gold  
“and gems, which they publicly offered  
“in the great church of Constantinople:  
“their palace was converted into a monas-  
C 3                      “tery;



“ tery ; and all males, except the guides of  
“ their conscience, the saints who had for-  
“ gotten the distinction of sexes, were scru-  
“ pulously excluded from the holy thresh-  
“ old \*.”

A female sacrifice announced to the world with such dazzling splendor, must have had great effect in extending the contagious passion for monastic virginity ; and, in the succeeding ages, we find that many queens and princesses, in different kingdoms of Europe, preferred the chaste comfort of monastic continence to all the parade and pleasure of royal dignity. We have seen, in a former chapter of this Essay, that the married royal fair ones, as well as the single, aspired to that celestial crown of virginity, which was considered as superior to every earthly diadem ; and many of these virgin wives (to give them the strange appellation which they coveted) appear to have obtained, from the religious complaisance of their husbands,

\* Gibbon, vol. iii. p. 315. edit. 1781.

a very plausible, if not an unquestionable title to the prime object of their ambition. In this wonderful species of purity, the royal fair ones of England seem to have surpassed those of other countries.—A very amusing Italian author, who has attempted to prove that the modern world is not inferior to the ancient in virtues of every class, among his examples of the most singular modern chastity, has mentioned the English queen Ediltruda, whom he considers as *the wife of three husbands*, yet justly canonized as *a virgin* \*. The extraordinary merit ascribed to this royal Old Maid of England, made me search minutely into the history of so interesting a personage. I find that the Ediltruda of this courteous Italian writer, is the lady celebrated by our venerable Bede under the name of *Ædiltrhyda*; a lady whose adventures I have mentioned in a preceding chapter, on a dif-

\* See a curious book, intituled, *L'hoggidi overo gl' ingegni non inferiori a' passati*. Venetia, 1658, parte seconda, p. 437.

ferent occasion. I will here add, that our honest historian, who allows her *only two husbands*, yet vouches for her virginity in the following remarkable terms. — After saying that she resided twelve years with Ecgfrid the king, her last husband, and yet remained a perpetual virgin of glorious integrity, he thus proceeds:—"To me, and "to some others, who doubted if this "were really so, bishop Wilfrid, of blessed "memory, declared that he was himself a "perfect witness of her integrity; for Ecgfrid had promised to give him an ample "estate, and a large sum of money, if he "could persuade the queen to admit his "embraces; being assured that she loved no "man better. Nor should we doubt," continues the honest Bede, "that a circumstance could happen even in our time, "which faithful historians inform us was "very frequent in the preceding age\*."

Frivolous

\* Cujus consortio cum duodecim annis uteretur, perpetua tamen mansit virginitatis integritate gloriosa;



Frivolous and nonsensical as anecdotes of this kind may appear to a fastidious critic, they particularly deserve the attention of the truly philosophical, as they instruct us in that most interesting branch of useful knowledge, *the history of manners*. Although the opinions and practices of our age afford but little countenance to the fact so candidly supported by the venerable Bede, the most sceptical reader may incline to admit the truth of it, when he considers that, in the days of *Ædilhryda*, to lead the life of a nun was esteemed the height of human happiness, and the surest passport to celest-

riosa; sicut mihi met sciscitanti, cum hoc an ita esset quibusdam venisset in dubium, beatæ memoriæ Vilfrid episcopus referebat, dicens se testem integritatis ejus esse certissimum: adeo ut Ecgfridus promiserit se ei terras ac pecunias multas esse donaturum, si reginæ posset persuadere ejus uti connubio; quia sciebat illam nullum virorum plus illo diligere. Nec diffidendum est nostra etiam ætate fieri potuisse, quod ævo præcedente aliquoties factum fideles historiæ narrant. Hist. Eccles. p. 162. edit. Cantab. 1722.

tial

tial beatitude: nay, to become the parent of a nun was regarded as a blessing of such importance, that some good ladies were contented to sacrifice, for this blessing, the glory arising from that continent virtue, in which they prided themselves so devoutly. This remark is grounded on an anecdote as curious as the preceding, which Dugdale has inserted in his *Monasticon*, from the manuscript chronicles of John, the vicar of Tinmouth. This pious historian has recorded, that a nobleman, whom he calls *Wolfhelmus*, having children by his wife, resided with her for eighteen years in perfect continence; when an angel appeared, and exhorted this chaste couple to cohabit once more, for the sake of producing a spouse for Christ; and then to persevere in their former purity of life \*. The sugges-

\* *Ex uxore sua liberos procreans, cum conjuge sua octodecim annis, usque ad provectam ætatem, cœlibem vitam duxit. Angelus autem Domini trina visione utrumque hortatus est ut convenirent, quia sponsam Christi generarent; et de cætero propositum servarent.* *Monasticon Anglicanum*, tom. i. p. 256.

tion of the angel was not disregarded ; and this heaven-directed intercourse gave birth to Wolfhildis, who became a nun of such signal purity, that she rejected the rich offers, and escaped from the amorous pursuit, of king Edgar ; although Wensleda, the aunt of that licentious monarch, condescended to act as the base minister of his pleasures, and employed the most ungenerous artifice to ensnare this resolute and illustrious virgin.

But if there were times in which monastic chastity appeared so firm as to resist and triumph over the importunities even of royal intrigue, we must confess that, in other seasons, it assumed a very different appearance, and turned at last into the most deplorable frailty.

The venerable Bede has himself given us a very striking picture of monastic enormities, in his epistle to Ecgbert. From this we learn, that many young men, who had no title to the monastic profession, got possession of monasteries, where, instead of  
engaging



engaging in the defence of their country, as their age and rank required, they indulged themselves in the most dissolute indolence, and did not abstain from the virgins that were devoted to God \*.

We learn from Dugdale, that in the reign of Henry the Second, the nuns of Amsbury abbey in Wiltshire were expelled from that religious house, on account of their incontinence †; and, to exhibit in the most lively colours the total corruption of monastic chastity, Bishop Burnet informs us, in his History of the Reformation, that when the nunneries were visited by the command of

\* Ideoque vacantes, ac sine conjugio, exacto tempore pubertatis, nullo continentiae proposito perdurent, atque hanc ob rem vel patriam suam, pro qua militare debuerant, trans mare abeuntes relinquant, vel majore scelere atque impudentiâ, qui propositum castitatis non habent, luxuriæ ac fornicationi deseruiant, neque ab ipsis sacratis Deo virginibus abstineant.

Epistola Venerabilis Bedæ  
ad Ecgbertum Antistitem.

† Monasticon, vol. i. p. 191.

Henry

Henry the Eighth, "whole houses were  
" found almost all with child \*."

When we consider to what oppressive indolence, to what a variety of wretchedness and guilt, the young and fair inhabitants of the cloister were frequently betrayed, we ought to admire those benevolent authors, who, when the tide of religious prejudice ran very strong in favour of monastic virginity, had spirit enough to oppose the torrent, and to caution the devout and tender sex against so dangerous a profession. It is in this point of view that the character of Erasmus appears with the most amiable lustre; and his name ought to be eternally dear to the female world in particular. Though his studies and constitution led him almost to idolize those eloquent fathers of the church, who have magnified monastic virginity, his good sense, and his accurate survey of human life,

\* I quote the words of the Bishop. See his History of the Reformation, vol. i. p. 190.

enabled him to judge of the misery in which female youth was continually involved by a precipitate choice of the veil. He knew the successful arts by which the subtle and rapacious Monks inveigled young women of opulent families into the cloister, and he exerted his lively and delicate wit in opposition to so pernicious an evil. The writings of many eminent authors have been levelled against the abuses of the monastic life; but several of these, like the noted work of the humorous Rabelais, appear to have flowed from a spirit as wanton and licentious as ever lurked in a convent, and abound in language offensive to every decent reader. It is not thus with Erasmus; his two dialogues, intitled, *The Virgin averse to Marriage*, and *The Penitent Virgin*, are written with admirable pleasantry, and seem to have been dictated by a chaste and angelic desire to promote the felicity of woman.

In those nations of Europe where nunneries still exist, how many lovely victims  
are



are continually sacrificed to the avarice or absurd ambition of inhuman parents ! The misery of these victims has been painted with great force by some benevolent writers of France, and particularly by that admirable novelist Madame de Genlis, in her Letters on Education. In most of these pathetic histories, that are founded on the abuse of convents, the misery originates from the parent, and falls upon the child. The reverse has sometimes happened ; and there are examples of unhappy parents, who have been rendered miserable by the religious perversity of a daughter. In the fourteenth volume of that very amusing book, the *Causes Célèbres*, a book which is said to have been the favourite reading of Voltaire, there is a striking history of a girl under age, who was tempted by pious artifice to settle herself in a convent, in express opposition to parental authority. Her parents, who had vainly tried the most tender persuasion, endeavoured at last to redeem their lost child by a legal process against  
the

the nunnery in which she was imprisoned. The pleadings on this remarkable trial may, perhaps, be justly reckoned among the finest pieces of eloquence that the lawyers of France have produced. Monsieur Gillet, the advocate for the parents, represented, in the boldest and most affecting language, the extreme baseness of this religious seduction. His eloquence appeared to have fixed the sentiments of the judges; but the cause of superstition was pleaded by an advocate of equal power, and it finally prevailed. The unfortunate parents of Marie Vernat, for this was the name of the deluded girl, were condemned to resign her for ever, and to make a considerable payment to those artful devotees, who had piously robbed them of their child.

When we reflect on the various evils that have arisen in convents, we have the strongest reason to rejoice and glory in that reformation, by which the nunneries of England were abolished. Yet, it would  
not

not be candid or just to consider all these as the mere harbours of licentiousness, since we are told, that at the time of their suppression, some of our religious houses were very honourably distinguished by the purity of their inhabitants. "The visitors," says bishop Burnet, "interceded earnestly for  
" one nunnery in Oxfordshire, Godstow,  
" where there was great strictness of life,  
" and to which most of the young gentle-  
" women of the country were sent to be  
" bred; so that the gentry of the country  
" desired the king would spare the house:  
" yet all was ineffectual \*."

In this point of view, much undoubtedly may be said in favour of convents; yet, when the arguments on both sides are fairly weighed, I apprehend that every true friend to female innocence will rejoice in those sensible regulations, which our Catholic neighbours have lately made respecting

\* History of the Reformation, vol. i. p. 238.



nunneries, and which seem to promise their universal abolition\*; an event which, we are told by experience, would be far from diminishing the purity of the female world, since I can safely assert, to the honour of the sisterhood, that at this day there are more *genuine Old Maids* existing in England, than could have been found here at any period of our history, when our island abounded in convents, when every county contained a multitude of nuns, and virginity was the most fashionable of all professions.

\* See a judicious account of such regulations in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, in the Annual Register of 1775. History of Europe, p. 148.

## C H A P.   I V.

*On the Suppression of Convents in France.*

SINCE the year \*, when this adventurous little book first sallied into the world, the events in a neighbouring kingdom have been so extraordinary, and important, as to attract the attention of every friend to human nature. Whether we regard the proceedings in France as suggested by the demons of anarchy, or guided by the good angel of reformation, they are highly interesting to all, who meditate on the affairs of earth; and they have a peculiar claim to the notice of the profest advocate of Old Maids, as they seem to threaten the utter extinction of his fair clients in one of the most populous nations in Europe.

\* 1785.

D 2

For

For let me here observe, to the honour of our sedate Maidens, that the light gaiety of their fair sisters in France will hardly allow them to possess such laudable discretion, such deliberate wisdom in the choice of their condition, as have induced many a worthy English spinster to prefer the solitude of a single life to the allurements of marriage, when marriage had nothing to offer, that could interest the heart: so that if no cloisters are to be found to cherish elderly virginity in France, there is great reason to apprehend, that in a few years, this delightful climate, which has been sometimes considered as the garden of the civilized world, though it may grow every day more and more productive, will not produce a single Old Maid. But an idea, much more afflicting to a generous and gallant spirit, disturbed, on this occasion, the champion of the sisterhood: on the first rumour that convents were to be utterly suppressed, he was grievously apprehensive, that many devout Old Maids must cruelly suffer



suffer from such an arrangement ; and, had not age and infirmity rendered it impossible for him to support the active character of a knight-errant in their service, he would undoubtedly have sallied forth for their protection, though at the hazard of making many mistakes as palpable as the grand mistake imputed to the mirror of modern chivalry, who is supposed, by his old friends, to have mistaken the honest windmill of freedom for the outrageous giant of anarchy ; and to have tilted against it so furiously, as to shiver the far-reaching and stout lance of his reason into a heap of radiant splinters by the violence of his encounter. But, alas ! the time-worn champion of Old Maids was disabled for such a knightly enterprize, at the important period, when his heart and his imagination would have otherwise impelled him to assist a thousand dulcineas of the cloister. What his misfortunes, however, rendered him unfit to accomplish, or attempt in his own person, he has happily effected by two

worthy substitutes, two noble knights of our country—Sir Orlando Freemantle, and Sir Nicholas Vertù. Sir Orlando is one of those happy beings, who, from a native airiness and intrepidity of spirit, has the inestimable power of overcoming the various troubles of life by holding them in derision.

*“ He dafts the world aside and bids it pass.”*

He seems to think so lightly of affliction, that a superficial observer might suppose him to want sensibility, and think him the worst friend in the world to the afflicted: but the reverse would be much nearer the truth; for Sir Orlando has a reserved, or rather a disguised tenderness of heart, which perpetually operates as an ally, or a secret privy counsellor to the visible activity and vigour of his mind. The time that a common friend would devote to condoling with the wretched, Sir Orlando would eagerly employ in the most strenuous endeavours to remove the source of their wretchedness: and this with a mind so  
unclouded

unclouded by the evils, which attracted his compassionate attention, that he would jest perhaps on the very misery, he was labouring to relieve.

His old associate, Sir Nicholas, has a spirit of a lower tone, yet of equal sweetness: he is no less a real friend to nature, but more fondly enamoured of the works of art. He would spare neither trouble nor expence to comfort an anxious Old Maid on the point of losing the asylum of a convent; but he would perhaps, with superior ardour, exert himself to deliver from the damp and darkness of a cloister, the painted head of a sinner, in preference to the living body of a maiden faint.

It happened that these two pleasant companions were passing some days with me, when the expected suppression of French convents was the reigning topic of the hour. Ah, what a time, I exclaimed, with a generous passion for enterprize, in which I could not participate, what a time is this for you men of health, leisure, affluence,

D 4

and



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and spirit! Prepare yourselves for a delightful and glorious expedition; and, under the good auspices of nature and of art take an enlightened survey of all the provincial convents of France, before they are utterly suppressed. What a season for you, Sir Nicholas, to rescue many a forgotten yet precious little picture of your idol Corregio; what opportunities for you, my gallant Orlando, to indulge your romantic passion for befriending maidens in distress! and trust me, among the fair Gallic sufferers on this occasion, you might find many an elderly virgin of our country, whom the barbarous pride of her relations has condemned, for some imaginary offence, to languish in early life amid the remote obscurity of a foreign cloister. Heavens! continued I, shaking one of my crutches, these are Old Maids for whom the noblest heroes of Chivalry would have been proud to contend! As I spoke of Corregio, I observed the eyes of Sir Nicholas began to glisten with lively hope; and at the idea of  
of



of many a deserted daughter of Britain pining through life in a foreign cloister, and at last in danger of losing even that woeful asylum, the manly figure of Sir Orlando seemed to grow more than mortal with a passionate desire of succouring the afflicted.

In a word, my two spirited friends embraced with ardour the enterprize, to which I excited them; and have favoured me from time to time with a circumstantial account of their discoveries. What a rich treasure have I thus accumulated for the benevolent reader, who takes a lively interest in all that relates to elderly maidens! What an enchanting variety is now before me of pathetic scenes and ludicrous adventures! I could indeed wish to adorn these little volumes with a few select anecdotes from this ample assemblage of all that is curious, on a topic so interesting; but the delicacy of friendship restrains me from this indulgence, as the two gallant travellers intend to oblige the world with a minute detail of their most curious discoveries in two volumes  
of

of an imperial size, most superbly decorated by every artist of eminence, who will labour, with fond enthusiasm, to delineate the precious reliques of monastic virginity, before it sinks into utter annihilation.

In this rare and miscellaneous collection of conventual curiosities, there are several pieces of poetry; as I was particularly affected by one poetical fragment, which delineates the heart-felt sufferings of a fair English recluse, my two generous and sympathetic travellers have kindly presented it to me, with a request that it may find a place in these pages.

The verses were founded on a private misfortune, and were left unfinished, they are therefore in some parts obscure. To remedy this imperfection as much as possible, I shall briefly relate a few of the most singular circumstances in the life of the fair sufferer who wrote them. These circumstances were imparted to my compassionate travellers by her intimate friend, who is mentioned in the verses under the  
title

title of Clara: the lady herself I shall distinguish by no name, but that of Sofronia; a name she had often a melancholy pleasure in assuming, from a remote resemblance she discovered in her own fate to that of a generous victim, the Sofronia of Tasso! But, alas! our English Sofronia had a destiny much more severe than what the fair martyr of the Italian poet endured in perishing with the object of her affection. She was the daughter of an opulent and austere country gentleman in the north of England; and at the age of nineteen most unhappily incurred the indignation of her father by an extraordinary combination of unfortunate circumstances, which led him to believe, that his only daughter was sinking into a most dishonourable intrigue with the domestic of a neighbouring gentleman. This was far from being true: Sofronia had great tenderness and modesty in her character; with an equal and perhaps a greater portion of dignity and pride. She was however involved in a fatal passion for



for a youth of high birth, and considerable expectations, but of a family as hostile to her father's as the Capulet's to the Montague's. The young and adventurous lover had disguised himself in the habit of a servant to obtain a secret interview. This circumstance exposed Sofronia to the most bitter accusations, and to all the brutality of exasperated arrogance. She found it impossible to clear herself from a charge she abhorred, without exposing her lover to perils more terrible to a fond imagination, than any sufferings that could fall upon herself: she had a military brother, of a most imperious vindictive temper; and the father of the youth she loved was as unfeeling and tyrannical as her own. From a generous dread therefore of involving the idol of her heart in domestic discord, by revealing their attachment, she supported the utmost inquisitorial cruelty from her own barbarous relations: who, notwithstanding all her protestations of innocence, believed her guilty of the most dishonourable incontinence; and

and conveyed her to a remote convent in a southern province of France. This prison for some time proved a paradise, as it relieved her from the persecution of domestic barbarity: and Sofronia's heart was long animated by the hope that her lover would one day repay all the bitter pangs she so generously supported to save him from oppression. I blush for the honour of man, in being forced to add, that he proved utterly unworthy of such magnanimous affection. For some time indeed he secretly contrived to cheer and delight Sofronia by repeated promises of gratitude and fidelity: but being a younger brother, he was sent to the East Indies in pursuit of fortune, and, corrupted by a scene so frequently fatal to integrity, he forgot his former unexampled obligations to the too generous fair-one, and hastily married the young, beautiful, and opulent widow of an elderly officer, who was killed in the Carnatic.

The mercenary apostate endeavoured to apologize for his conduct in a long letter

to

to the deserted Sofronia: who, abandoned as she was by her own family, seemed now to have no resource in the world.

In the agonies of disappointed affection she precipitately took the veil; and, languishing for many years under all the various wretchedness of a wounded spirit, at last died in the arms of the disconsolate Clara, a few months before my friends visited the convent, which had been chosen for the prison of this cruelly injured captive.

During the many years, that elapsed between the receipt of the Indian letter, which darkened all her prospects in life, and her lingering dissolution, she was never observed to express any thing like joy, except on her first hearing that the nunneries of France were to be utterly suppressed. On this occasion, as the travellers were informed by the interesting Clara, who had a melancholy pleasure in speaking of her departed friend, the fine emaciated countenance of Sofronia was for the last time irradiated by a glow of satisfaction.



The transient gleam of joy, which this idea produced in her dejected mind, inspired her with the following verses: yet that joy, as the reader will perceive, was soon overshadowed by the predominant anguish, arising from the recollection of all she had endured.

A POETICAL FRAGMENT,

WRITTEN BY AN ENGLISH LADY,

A few days before her death,

IN A FRENCH CONVENT.

*Torn from delight by tyrannous controul,  
My wasting frame abhors its vital breath;  
And, in this world of wrongs, my wounded soul  
Sees nothing worthy of a wish, but death:*

*On this detested earth I yet would pause,  
Dear soothing sister of my wither'd youth!  
To catch these tidings, which, in Freedom's cause,  
Thy sanguine fancy deems the voice of truth.*

*Yes,*

*Yes, I yet live to sympathize with thee,  
 To hail thy kindred in their bright career,  
 And blest thy firm compatriot's bold decree,  
 To reason consonant ! to nature dear !*

*She triumphs in the law-crush'd convents' fate,  
 The noblest trophy won by civic strife !—  
 Heaven shall no more be mocked with prayers  
 of hate,  
 Nor earth polluted with the tombs of life.*

*Dear Clara ! thou, to light and love restored,  
 Shalt walk triumphant by a brother's side ;  
 Weave spotless laurels round his guardian sword,  
 And wake to all the joys of virtuous pride :*

*But when they chance to strike my troubled  
 thought,  
 Names of endearment turn to stings of woe ;  
 Names, at whose sound my youthful bosom  
 caught  
 Gay Sensibility's enchanting glow !*

*He who my tender infancy caressed,  
 And vow'd to guard me with fraternal fire,  
 He,*

*He, barb'rous foe to innocence oppressed!  
Inflam'd against me a vindictive fire.*

*The fancied crime, that my indignant soul  
Could not with truth acknowledge, or abjure;  
Love, that by silence sought pure Honour's goal,  
Led me to tortures, that slow death insure.*

*Ah why, so oft invoked thro' tedious years,  
Com'st thou, cold phantom! with such tardy  
pace,  
To her, who, dead to earthly hopes and fears,  
Would change this dungeon for thy dark em-  
brace?*

*This dungeon! where the poor infected mind,  
Hoarding disgust, as misers board their pelf,  
Sinks, to a mental pestilence resigned,  
From loving no one, to abhor itself.*

*Yes, Clara! generous friend! whose worth I  
own,  
Yet want the power to prize it, as I ought,  
My heartless bosom I to thee have shown,  
And all the misery of morbid thought:*



*Angel of Pity ! traversing our sphere,  
And searching griefs, that human guilt  
would hide,*

*Oh seest thou aught more worthy of thy tear,  
Than cloister'd victims of parental pride ?*

*When loveless languor, in a dusky pail,  
Enshrouds the spirit, whence all hopes depart ;  
When mortified affections turn to gall,  
And cold spleen mantles in the stagnate heart ;*

*Balm for her wounds how vainly reason seeks,  
While injur'd Nature droops in ev'ry nerve ?  
While forc'd Devotion scorns the prayer she  
speaks,  
And doubts the Deity, she's doom'd to serve.*

*Oh lead me, Death ! whose icy hand I feel,  
Where Faith's effulgent form irradiates all !  
Seraph of Retribution ! — — — —*

CHAP. V.

*On some Monastic Virgins distinguished by  
literary Talents.*

WHEN we consider what innumerable multitudes of virgins have passed their lives in the leisure of a convent—when we reflect on the active ingenuity of the female mind, and remember that convents, during many ages, were the treasuries of all the learning that remained upon the earth—we may be surprised in observing the very small number of monastic Virgins, who are said to have bequeathed to us any literary production. Perhaps, indeed, many a fair and chaste author has existed, whose name and works have been unjustly buried in sudden oblivion. I am led to this conjecture by finding that one monastic and maiden prodigy of literature has been strangely overlooked or misrepresented

sented by our best antiquarians ; I mean the poetical Saxon nun Hrosvitha or Roso-vida. This lady, who flourished about the year 980, exerted her poetical genius to confirm and increase the number of monastic Old Maids. She wrote six dramatic compositions in imitation of Terence ; but on subjects very different from those of the Roman dramatist, as the plays of the virgin author were chiefly intended to animate her sister nuns to the preservation of their virginity.

It is strange that these dramatic curiosities are so imperfectly known among us, especially as some of our ablest scholars have lately employed themselves in elaborate researches on the obscure origin of the modern drama.

Mr. Warton, in the emendations which he has added to his second volume on English poetry, has, indeed, mentioned the name and title of this chaste and pious dramatist, but attributes her compositions to her first editor Conradus Celtes, who published



lished her plays and other sacred poems at Nuremburg, 1501.

Such inaccuracies are inevitable in a work so various and extensive as the excellent History of English Poetry. I have now to lament, that, since I made the preceding remark, the learned and amiable subject of it is removed from the reach of my censure and my praise : I lament it the more, as the curious appendix, with which I am enabled to enrich a new edition of this little work, would have afforded to that benevolent and accomplished poetical antiquarian a complete opportunity of correcting his involuntary injustice to the Saxon Virgin Rosvida, the literary Phoenix of the cloister.

As I have obtained, by indefatigable pursuit, a sight of her rare compositions ; I had taken the pains to translate two the most striking of her extraordinary dramas, intending to insert the translation with the original, which the curious reader will find at the close of this volume : but I reflected

that I might afford particular pleasure to many a literary Old Maid by inserting only the Latin; as it would furnish her with agreeable opportunities of consulting some learned Cadenus of her acquaintance, on these early productions of the monastic muse. I have also that tenderness for the credit of the pious and chaste Rosvida, that I was unwilling to expose her, in an English dress, to the fastidious and uncandid criticism of every idle witling.

If the sisterhood approve my zeal and discretion in behalf of the Saxon virgin, I shall be the more encouraged to devote the residue of my advanced life to their service, and execute, to their honour, a work which the republic of letters has long wanted, a Biographical Dictionary of eminent Old Maids.

Having this grand performance in contemplation, I shall not in these little books attempt to expatiate on the Terefas of Spain,

Spain \*, the Schurmans of Germany †, the Scuderys of France ‡, the Bourignons of Flanders,

\* Saint Terefa wrote her own pious memoirs, containing a full account of her various interviews with angels and the devil. The best edition of her works is in two quarto volumes, Madrid, 1752. She died 1582, and was canonized by Gregory XV. 1621.

† Anna Maria Schurman, eminent for her skill in languages, was a native of Cologne. She resided at Utrecht, and declined an offer of marriage from the famous Dutch poet, pensionary Cats. She died in Friesland, 1678. The most remarkable of her productions is a logical treatise, in Latin, to prove that the female mind is fit for learning and science.

‡ Magdeleine de Scudery, perhaps the plainest and most ingenious of Old Maids. Her romances, &c. amounted to forty-six volumes. She died in 1701, at the age of ninety-four. Her poetical compliment to the artist who drew her picture, shews us, in a lively point of view, both the homeliness of her features, and the sweetness of her character. The compliment may lose some of its elegance, but, I think, none of its good-nature, in the following translation:



Flanders \*, or, in short, on any of those voluminous virgins, who have astonished the different kingdoms of Europe by the fertility of their pious or romantic pens.

*Nanteuil ! what wondrous magic grace  
Must in your pencil lurk !  
For in my glass I hate my face,  
Yet love it in your work.*

\* Antoinette Bourignon, born at Lisle 1616, was a visionary Old Maid. Though deformed from her birth, she surmounted many difficulties and hardships to preserve her chastity, and sustained an equal portion of literary labour, in the hope of illuminating the world by the publication of her pious reveries. They were printed in twenty-one volumes, octavo, with a life of the chaste author, written by one of her disciples. Bayle has given a very lively account, both of the adventures and opinions of this wonderful lady. She was not only endued with the most perfect chastity herself, says her biographer, but had the faculty of communicating that virtue to others, a faculty which the philosophical Bayle has taken the liberty of treating with much spritely ridicule. This singular virgin died in Friesland, at the age of sixty-four.

But

But there are two monastic Old Maids, so very remarkable, yet so little known in our country, that I must embrace the present opportunity of introducing them to the acquaintance of my fair readers. The first is a pious visionary virgin of Venice; the second, a poetical nun of Mexico. To the Venetian virgin, who is known in France by the name of Mere Jeanne, the famous French traveller, Guillaume Postel, was indebted for most of those singular ideas, by which he excited universal astonishment in the age of Francis the First. Postel was patronized for his extensive erudition by that munificent prince, to whom the learned enthusiast very confidently promised universal dominion. By this prophecy in favour of France, Postel excited the enmity of some Spanish Jesuits in Rome, which obliged him to depart from that city, and repair to Venice. It was here that the wonderful *Mere Jeanne*, whom he describes as *a little old woman of forty* \*,

\* Une petite vieille femmelette, de l'âge de cinquante ans.

imparted

imparted to him those mysteries, which he communicated to the world in a little book written in Italian, whose long title is so curious, that I shall insert an entire translation of it: "The first News of another world; that is, the admirable History (and not less necessary and useful to be read and understood by every one, than stupendous), intituled, The Venetian Virgin —part seen, part proved, and most faithfully written, by William Postel, first-born of the Regeneration, and Spiritual Father of the said Virgin." —1555. Octavo. —Of this very rare volume France is said to contain only two copies; but there is a French publication by the same author, containing the same doctrine; which consists in announcing to women an universal dominion over the world. This dominion, however, is purely spiritual, and means nothing more than the establishment of a more perfect reason, which beginning, according to the author, in his Venetian Virgin, was to extend over the universe, and thus confirm and perpetuate the sovereignty



reignty of woman. How far the doctrine of Postel may have been verified, and how far the sisterhood in particular may have enjoyed that sovereign purity and perfection of reason, which this learned man first discovered in his celebrated Venetian Old Maid, are delicate points, which the experience of my fair readers will best enable them to decide.

While they are settling the matter, let me hasten to Mexico, and present to them, from that city, sister Juana Inez de la Cruz, a religious virgin, so eminent for her poetical talents, that she has been honoured with the title of a Tenth Muse.

Juana was born in November, 1651, at the distance of a few leagues from the city of Mexico. Her father was one of the many Spanish gentlemen, who sought to improve a scanty fortune by an establishment in America, where he married a lady of that country, descended from Spanish parents. Their daughter Juana was distinguished in her infancy by an uncommon passion for literature,

literature, and a wonderful facility in the composition of Spanish verses. Her parents sent her, when she was eight years old, to reside with her uncle, in the city of Mexico. She had there the advantage of a learned education; and, as her extraordinary talents attracted universal regard, she was patronized by the lady of the viceroy, the Marquis de Mancera, and, at the age of seventeen, was received into his family. A Spanish encomiast of Juana relates a remarkable anecdote, which, he says, was communicated to him by the viceroy himself. That nobleman, astonished by the extensive learning of the young Juana, invited forty of the most eminent literati that his country could afford, to try the extent and solidity of Juana's erudition. The young female scholar was freely but politely questioned, on the different branches of science, by theologians, philosophers, mathematicians, historians, and poets; "and, "as a royal galleon" (I use the words of his excellency the viceroy, says my Spanish author)

author) "as a royal galleon would defend  
" herself against a few scallops, that might  
" attack her, so did Juana Inez extricate  
" herself from the various questions, argu-  
" ments, and rejoinders, that each in his  
" own province proposed to her."

The applause which she received, on this signal display of her accomplishments, was far from inspiring the modest Juana with vanity or presumption. Indeed, a pious humility was her most striking characteristic. Her life amounted only to forty-four years, and of these she passed twenty-seven, distinguished by the most exemplary exercise of all the religious virtues, in the convent of St. Geronimo. Her delight in books was extreme, and she is said to have possessed a library of four thousand volumes; but, towards the close of her life, she made a striking sacrifice to charity, by selling her darling books for the relief of the poor. Few female authors have been more celebrated in life, or in death more lamented. The collection of  
her



her works, in three quarto volumes, contains a number of panegyrics, in verse and prose, bestowed on this chaste poetess by the most illustrious characters both of Old and New Spain. The most sensible of the Spanish critics, father Feyjoo, has made this general remark on Juana's compositions, "that they excel in ease and elegance, but are deficient in energy;" a failing the more remarkable, as the pious enthusiasm of this poetical nun was so great, that she wrote in her own blood a profession of her faith. Let me observe, in answer to her critic, that most of Juana's verses are written on subjects, where poetical energy was not to be expected. Many of her poems are occasional compliments to her particular friends; and, in her sacred dramas, the absurd superstitions of her country were sufficient to annihilate all poetical sublimity.

In one of her short productions, she describes the injustice of men towards her own sex. I shall close my brief account of this

this admirable maiden with an imitation of this performance, taking the liberty, however, to omit several stanzas. It is, I think, the most pleasing specimen that I could select from her poetry, and has a particular claim to a place in this Essay, since it may be regarded as a vindication of Old Maids, composed by a virgin of eminence and authority.

\* *Weak men! who without reason aim  
To load poor woman with abuse,  
Not seeing that yourselves produce  
The very evils that you blame.*

*You 'gainst her firm resistance strive,  
And, having struck her judgment mute,  
Soon to her levity impute  
What from your labour you derive.*

\* *Hombres necios, que acusais  
A la muger sin razon;  
Sin ver, que sois la ocasion  
De lo mismo, que culpais, &c.*

Of

*Of woman's weakness much afraid,  
Of your own prowess still you boast ;  
Like the vain child, who makes a ghost,  
Then fears what he himself has made.*

*Her, whom your arms have once embrac'd,  
You think, presumptuously, to find,  
When she is woo'd, as Thais kind,  
When wedded, as Lucretia chaste.*

*How rare a fool must he appear,  
Whose folly mounts to such a pass,  
That first he breathes upon the glass,  
Then grieves because it is not clear !*

*Still with unjust, ungrateful pride,  
You meet both favour and disdain ;  
The firm, as cruel you arraign,  
The tender, you as weak deride.*

*Your foolish humour none can please,  
Since, judging all with equal phlegm,  
One for her rigor you condemn,  
And one you censure for her ease.*

*What*



*What wondrous gifts must her adorn,  
Who would your lasting love engage,  
When rigorous nymphs excite your rage,  
And easy fair ones raise your scorn !*

*But while you shew your pride or power,  
With tyrant passions vainly hot,  
She's only blest who heeds you not,  
And leaves you all in happy hour.*

## C H A P. VI.

*On some Old Maids of the new World.*

SEVERAL of the Spanish writers, in giving an early account of the western world, which they had just discovered, and were eager to make known, have described the wantonness and the fervility of the American females in colours that are disgraceful to human nature. The relations of Peter Cieca de Leon, in particular, exhibit these indecent yet beautiful savages in the most deplorable point of view; and might almost lead us to imagine, that, rich as the new world appeared in many valuable productions, it never produced an Old Maid. Happily, however, for the honour of the sisterhood, there arose in that country a Spanish historian, who, being descended from a princess of Peru, engaged with patriotic ardour in the noble task of vindicating

ing the purity of the Peruvian ladies. The Inca Garcilaso de la Vega opens the fourth book of his Royal Commentaries with a circumstantial account of the virgins devoted to the sun.—“In the false religion of Peru,” says the historian, “there were many things “truly great and respectable; one of these “was the profession of perpetual virginity, “which the women preserved in many houses “of retirement, built for them in many provinces of the empire: and, that it may be “understood what women these were, to “whom they were devoted, and in what “they were exercised, I shall describe them “minutely, because the Spanish historians, “who treat of this point, pass over it, according to the vulgar proverb, like *a cat* “over coals \*.”

This illustrious author then enters into every particular relating to these religious virgins, describing, from his own knowledge, the exact situation of the building in

\* Como Gato por brasas.



the city of Cusco, where they had formerly resided: — he contradicts the general opinion concerning them, and clearly proves, that they never dwelt or officiated as priestesses in the temple of the Sun; on the contrary, he asserts, that the Incas took particular care that no men should enter into the mansion of these sequestered maidens, and no women into that of the Sun — two distinct buildings, at a considerable distance from each other, which Garcilaso tells us he had seen entire, as they were preserved with particular veneration by the Peruvians, in that memorable conflagration, when, revolting against their Spanish oppressors, they burnt the city of Cusco.

These virgins, although they did not reside in the temple of the Sun, were still considered as the wives of that radiant power, whom they respected as the progenitor of their princes. They were all of royal blood — their number was not limited, “but commonly amounted,” says the historian, “to more than fifteen hundred.”

These

These ingenious maidens employed themselves in working assiduously for their nominal husband, the Sun; and, as he had no immediate occasion for the splendid vestments they fashioned for him, it was their custom to present his natural heir, the reigning Inca, with the rich and elegant productions of their manual labour. It is remarkable, that these sequestered virgins were liable to that inhuman punishment which was inflicted on the frail vestals of Rome; and, towards the person who seduced them from their vows of chastity, the Peruvian law was still more severe than the Roman; it not only took the life of the daring offender himself, but extended to all the unfortunate beings to whom he was related: all his possessions were to be laid desolate, that the earth might retain no traces of a wretch, who had impiously violated a hallowed spouse of the Sun.

But whether the maids of Peru were purer in constitution than the Roman vestals, or whether the Peruvian heroes had

not, like those of Rome, that audacity of character, which delights to plunge into the deepest guilt, we are assured that Cusco was not inured, like Rome, to the horrid spectacle of burying frail virgins alive.—“Such was the law,” says the historian of Peru, “but the execution of it was never seen, because no person was ever found to have offended against it.”

The horror and indignation with which the Peruvians regarded those Spanish ruffians who profaned this virgin sanctuary, are happily expressed in those spirited verses of Dr. Warton, intitled, *The Dying Indian*.—The warrior thus exults at his death, in the idea of having avenged the injured maidens of his country.

O my son,  
 I feel the venom busy in my breast.—  
 Approach! and bring my crown, deck'd with  
     the teeth  
 Of that bold Christian, who first dar'd de-  
     flower  
*The Virgins of the Sun.*—

*I mark'd*



*I mark'd the spot where they interr'd this traitor,*

*And once at midnight stole I to his tomb,  
And tore his carcase from the earth, and left it  
A prey to poisonous flies. Preserve this crown  
With sacred secrecy\*.*

The community of holy virgins had subsisted for some centuries in Peru, before that unfortunate empire became the victim of Spanish avarice, hypocrisy, and oppression: yet those historical sceptics, who delight to start a doubt on the existence of distant virtue, might intimate, with some plausibility, that this numerous community of nominal virgins never contained, perhaps, a single genuine Old Maid. They might say, that as the reigning Inca had the privilege of visiting these sequestered ladies (as he was the acknowledged representative of that radiant luminary to whom they all professed a connubial obedience) every virgin-

\* Doddsley's Poems, vol. iv. p. 206.

wife of the Sun would be eager to consummate her marriage, by receiving the caresses of his imperial proxy.

But to invalidate such a sceptical objection against the perpetual virginity of the Peruvian nuns, it may be sufficient to observe, that, besides the fifteen hundred virgins who were confined in Cusco, there were many houses of retirement in different provinces of the empire, where the most lovely damsels were sequestered, as the wives or concubines of the reigning Inca. And such was the religious veneration which the fair Peruvians entertained for their prince, that, if we may believe their historian, every beautiful virgin considered it as the height of felicity, to be made a captive during life, for the mere chance of contributing to the pleasures of her royal master.

The courteous Garcilaso is so solicitous to vindicate the chastity of the fair Peruvians, that he informs us, there were other ladies, who did not live in a state of seclusion

sion from society, yet were bound by vows of perpetual virginity, which they most faithfully observed. He assures us, that he was personally acquainted with a most respectable old lady of this class, who was both a friend and a relation of the princess his mother. Whoever considers this honourable testimony in their favour, will readily, I trust, admit that primitive Old Maids existed in the western world, before it was enlightened by its European invaders.

I cannot quit this part of my subject without paying a just compliment to that immortal, though fictitious, maiden of Peru, the Zilio of Madame de Graffigny.—Whoever wishes to be more acquainted with the Virgins of the Sun, may find both information and delight in the Peruvian Letters; a work that, for delicacy of sentiment, and vivacity of description, is inferior, perhaps, to no performance which the literary world has received from the tender and lively imagination of woman.



## C H A P. VII.

*On the Reverence paid to Old Maids by our  
Northern Ancestors.*

OF all people on the globe, those to whom the sisterhood of Old Maids have been most indebted, are undoubtedly our brave progenitors of the North. The manly and generous Goths have acquired a degree of glory,

*“ Above all Greek, above all Roman fame,”*

by paying the most tender deference to the fair sex, and by setting the highest value on the virtue of chastity. According to the religious creed of these gallant tribes, the virgin who died chaste, like the warrior who fell in battle, was immediately admitted, with distinguished honour, into their  
Valhalla,

Valhalla, or Palace of the Dead \*. Among the Goddeſſes enumerated in that amuſing collection of Gothic Fables, the Edda, we find the two virgins Fylla and Gefione. The office of the latter was to preſide over maidens after their death. The Hall of Odin, and the Paradife of Mahomet, bear a ſtriking reſemblance to each other. The beatitude which departed warriors were ſuppoſed to enjoy in theſe two regions of eternal delight, appears to have conſiſted chiefly in being attended by virgins; and the learned Keyſler ſuppoſes, that Mahomet was indebted to the ancient Scythians for this alluring idea †.

\* In ejus (Freiæ) aulam etiam veniebant e ſequiore ſexu, quæ virgines obſiſſent.

Keyſler, Antiq. Septent. pag. 180.

† Mahomed enim nihil novi hac parte effinxit et pollicitus eſt aſſeclis; ſed quod in vicinis gentibus, Scytharum progenie, et Turcis imprimis fortè videbat ſuis arridere, id in novam, quam adornabat, religionem tranſtulit.

Ibid. pag. 152.

The

The Gothic maid, who persevered in her chastity, had indeed a peculiar claim to distinction in the regions of the dead, since, according to the popular creed of her country, she was exposed, when living, to trials of the most extraordinary and tremendous nature, arising from the influence of Runic spells. In the singular little poem, in which Odin enumerates his own magical powers, he declares, that "he is possessed of an incantation, by which he can change the mind of any coy maiden, and bend her entirely to his wishes \*."—"And long after the age of Odin," says Bartholine, "it was believed, that by a certain Runic composition, the mind of any damsel, however averse to love, might be rendered pliant to the entreaties of her admirer—but if the lover, who attempted to form this amorous spell, made any mistake, even in tracing a single letter of the charm, instead of inspiring his fair one with love,

\* Bartholin. Antiq. Dan. p. 658.

"he



“he deprived her of health, and loaded her  
 “with such bodily infirmities, as could be  
 “cured only by a more skilful master of  
 “this interesting magic, who might disco-  
 “ver the errors of the imperfect spell, and  
 “remove the evil it produced by a new in-  
 “cantation.”

To confirm his account of this popular opinion, my author has quoted a little story, which shews what a severe misfortune it was to a Gothic lady to be beloved by a blockhead.

The sum of the story is this:—Helga, the daughter of Thorfin, was reduced to great infirmity, both of body and mind, by one of these amorous Runic spells, imperfectly written by a bold but ignorant rustic, who had first vainly sought her in marriage, and afterwards as vainly courted her to an illicit connection. The source of the lady’s malady was detected, and she was restored to health by the superior magical talents of Egill the poet.

If the heroes of the North, endued as  
 they

they were with great bodily strength, possessed also this magic influence over the minds of the fair sex, they certainly deserve our esteem for having used their double powers with admirable moderation and generosity. The Goths, in particular, were not only attentive to female honour, in respect to the women of their own nation; but they paid the highest regard to the chastity of their fair captives, in the most licentious hours of victory and plunder. When the Gothic king Totila made himself master of Rome, he exerted so much care in preserving the women from violation, that, according to the historian Procopius, “not a single virgin, or matron, or widow, was dishonoured \*.”

Before that event, an Italian, named Calaber, had complained to the Gothic monarch, that his daughter had been ravished

\* Ita ut non virginis, non matrisfamilias, non viduæ ullius corpori illudum sit: unde magna illi modestiæ fama.—Procopii, lib. iii. —Grotii Hist. Goth. P. 356.

by a powerful chieftain of his army. The magnanimous sovereign doomed the offender to death, although the Gothic nobles interceded for him, on account of his military talents: Totila replied to their intercession in a speech truly royal:—the nobles acquiesced in the justice of their king: the distinguished ravisher suffered death for his offence, and his property was given to the maiden whom he had injured \*.

A tender veneration for the fair sex was a characteristic of the northern barbarians, to which Cæsar and Tacitus have borne a more early and a very honourable testimony. The latter has preserved the names of two Northern Old Maids, who appear to have been idolized by their gallant countrymen for their prophetic sagacity. The most eminent of these was Veleda, a virgin who

\* *Peruasi dictis Gothi pro satellite haud ultra deprecabantur; sed regem sinebant de eo quod vellet agere. Is haud multò post homini vitam ademit. Pecunias, quæcunque ejus fuerant, stuprum passæ dedit.*

*Grotii Hist. Goth. p. 324.*

had



had extensive authority over that warlike tribe the Bructeri, according to the custom of the Germans, says Tacitus, which led them to worship their prophetic females as goddesses. Valeda maintained her dignity with all the circumspection that is proper for a maiden of a character so important. She resided in a lofty tower, and admitted not to her presence the Roman emissaries who wished to converse with her \*: yet, sharing the misfortunes of her brave countrymen, this chaste prophetess fell a victim to Roman tyranny, and is supposed to have been a captive in Rome during the reign of Vespasian. She had, however, a virgin successor in her religious office, whose name was Ganna; and from this circumstance Mr. Pellontier, in his elaborate history of the Celts, has supposed, with great probability, that in the German

\* Sed coram adire, alloquique Valedam, negatum: Arcebantur aspectu, quo venerationis plus inesset.

Tacitus, Hist. lib. iv.

tribe

tribe of the Bructeri there was a regular succession of prophetical Old Maids \*.

The active valour, and the enthusiastic gallantry, which the manly barbarians of the North discovered, even in their rudest state, produced, in process of time, that singular and gorgeous monument of Gothic genius, the institution of Chivalry, an institution superior, in some points of view, to every thing that we find in the antiquities of Greece and Rome; an institution peculiarly interesting to the sisterhood of Old Maids, as one of its capital objects was the preservation of virginity!

A literary prelate of our church has attempted, in a series of letters, to elucidate this noble institution, and to vindicate the glory of the Gothic character:—but he has unluckily made two remarks, which would greatly debase the very character that he wishes to exalt, if they were not, like many of his critical opinions, entirely devoid of all so-

\* Histoire des Celtes, livre iv. chap. 18.

lid foundation. As these two remarks relate to virgins, and their chaste Gothic admirers and defenders, I shall dwell a little on both. The learned bishop asserts, that the Grecian hero, or demi-god, and the Gothic knight, were characters completely similar, or, to use his own words, that "the Grecian Bacchus and Hercules were *the exact counterparts* of Sir Launcelot and Amadis de Gaule\*." He quotes, indeed, the great authority of Spenser for this comparison; but a slight resemblance in valour and conquest was sufficient for the purpose of the poet. The critic, attempting to aggrandize the Gothic name, ought, instead of adopting this poetical similitude, to have shewn how the Grecian differed from the more noble and more virtuous Goth. In the great point of generous chastity, the difference was extreme. In the Greek poem, that records the adventures of Bacchus, one of his principal exploits is that of violating a

\* Hurd's Letters on Chivalry, Letter iv.

sleeping



sleeping nymph \*; and the incontinence of Hercules was so notorious, that (not to mention his robbing an Amazonian princess of her girdle) he is said by Herodotus to have distinguished himself by a very gross adventure in Scythia †. If the Gothic heroes, Sir Launcelot and Amadis, could start into life, what punishment would they think severe enough for a critic, who had rashly dared to call them *the exact counterparts* of these Grecian ravishers. In fact, no comparison can be more injurious; for in the heroic ages, the Grecian hero appears to have taken the most unwarrantable liberties with every virgin that fell into his power; and the Gothic knight, on the contrary, not only defended the purity of every maid in distress, but was often bound by the most solemn oaths to remain a virgin himself.—The second remark of the learned bishop is equally injurious to the pure and liberal heroes of the Gothic or feudal ages: for it supposes

\* Nonni Dionys. lib. xlviii.

† Herodot. lib. iv.

“ that *feudal gallantry* was the offspring of the  
“ privilege, which the ladies then possessed,  
“ of feudal succession \* ;” or, in other words,  
that the Gothic knights idolized the fair for  
their rank and riches, and not for their beauty  
and their virtue. We can believe, indeed,  
that such ideas might influence the courtly  
manners of a priest in the eighteenth century ;  
but a very slight acquaintance with history  
and romance is sufficient to convince us, that  
such ideas were never harboured by any  
true knight, in the purest ages of chivalry.

How far the virtue of the ladies was  
more respected than their rank, by the gal-  
lant gentry of this period, we have a strik-  
ing example in an anecdote related by that  
indefatigable searcher into the records of  
chivalry, Mr. de Sainte Palaye.

This curious author informs us, “ that  
“ the Chevalier de la Tour, in his instruc-  
“ tions addressed to his daughters, about  
“ the year 1371, mentions a knight of his  
“ time, who, in passing near the castles in-

\* Letters on Chivalry.

“ habited

“habited by ladies, affixed a mark of infamy to the mansion of those, who were not worthy to receive loyal knights pursuing honour and virtue. He bestowed, at the same time, a just encomium on those whose merits entitled them to public esteem \*.”

That insinuating Platonic love, which mingled itself with the manners of chivalry, has often, perhaps, undermined the chastity of a resolute virgin. It would be a curious speculation to consider how far this refined passion has proved a treacherous destroyer of Old Maids, and to trace its prevalence or decline in different ages; but, as I fear it might lead me to swell this little work into a formidable size, I shall content myself with pointing out the subject as worthy the researches of my philosophical brethren; and only remark, that this chaste yet dangerous affection was highly fashionable at the court of England in the year 1634, as

\* *Memoires sur l' Ancienne Chevalerie*, tom. i. p. 86.



we learn from one of Howell's familiar letters \*; and that it is ridiculed with much lively spirit in a play of Sir William Davenant's, called the Platonic Lovers, represented in 1636.

Let us return to the ages of chivalry.—Notwithstanding the prevalence of this perilous Platonic love in those ages, the spirit of the times gave such fidelity, as well as vigour, to all the generous affections, that I am persuaded many a lovely damsel of that period became a perfect Old Maid, from a faithful attachment to the memory of her gallant deceased admirer. I consider the tender Melesinda, Countess of Tripoli, in Palestine, as a most respectable Old Maid of this class. The romantic Troubadour Geoffrey Rudel became enamoured of her beauty by the mere report of her charms. He crossed the sea to throw himself at her feet. Illness seized him on the voyage, and when they carried him ashore, he was supposed to be dead. The singular passion of the

\* Vol. i. page 259.

knight touched the tender soul of the Countess. She hastened to visit this gallant victim of love. He still breathed—received her compassionate embraces, and expired with expressions of delight on the felicity of dying in her arms. The Countess honoured his remains with a magnificent funeral, and retired to lament him, during her life, in the chaste solitude of the cloister \*.

Strange as it may sound, the virginity of woman will be often found to have derived its firmest support from the gallantry of man; a paradox sufficiently explained by the preceding story.

As the Greeks were utterly unacquainted with the spirit of gallantry, according to the confession of their learned historian Mr. Mitford †, this may be one among other reasons to account for the extreme scarcity of elderly virgins in Greece. For our superior politeness, and that happy mix-

\* *Histoire des Troubadours*, tom. i. p. 89.

† *History of Greece*, p. 122.

ture of frankness and delicacy in our manners towards women, by which the modern world is exalted above the ancient, we are certainly indebted to our noble ancestors of the North, who exhibited, in the earliest period of their history, the most generous attention to female honour in general, and a particular veneration for their intelligent Old Maids,

END OF THE FIFTH BOOK.

BOOK



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BOOK VI.CONTAINING MISCELLANEOUS MATTER.

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## CHAP. I.

*On certain Passages in English Poets concerning Virginitv.—On the medical Influence ascribed to it.—On various Devices supposed to ascertain it, &c.*

HAVING examined at large, in a former part of this Essay, the many brilliant compliments which the fathers of the church have paid to virginitv, I shall now consider the terms in which the greatest poets of our country have spoken of this delicate and interesting subject. As enthusiasm is the essential quality both of saints and poets, we might from hence conjecture, that the genuine Old Maid would  
be

be treated with equal reverence by both; but alas! the poetical enthusiast is subject to a certain gay and wanton levity of spirit, which tempts him now and then to fail in the respect that we all owe to the sisterhood. This remark is particularly applicable to Chaucer and Shakespeare. I am happy, however, in being able to add, for the honour of the English muse, that two poets, of equal eminence, have treated virginity with all the modest and tender veneration which we have seen it receiving from so many eloquent saints. It will, I trust, be amusing to compare the language of these four illustrious bards on our favourite subject. — Let us begin with Chaucer. Though he flourished at a time when the convent and chivalry, those two profest guardians of maiden purity, were in fashion, he does not seem to have entertained any very high reverence for a perpetual virgin; at least we find him treating that character with much sarcastic jocularity, in the long  
and

and lively prologue with which his Wife of Bath introduces her tale. The following lines seem to indicate that the poet himself possessed a spirit as amorous as that of the buxom lady, in whose character he is speaking.

*What rekketh me, though folk say vilanie  
Of sbrewed Lamech, and his bigamie ;  
I wot wel Abraham was an holy man,  
And Jacob eke, as fer as ever I can,  
And eche of hem had wives mo than two,  
And many another holy man also.  
Wber can ye seen, in any maner age,  
That highe God defended mariage  
By expresse word? I pray you telleth me,  
Or wber commanded be virginitee?*

*I wot, as wel as ye, it is no drede,  
The Apostle, whan he spake of maidenbede,  
He said, that precept thereof had he non ;  
Men may conseille a woman to ben on,  
But conseilling is no commandement ;  
He put it in our owen jugement.*

*For*



*For hadde God commanded Maidenbede,  
Than had he dampned Wedding out of drede ;  
And certes, if ther were no sede ysowe,  
Virginitee than whereof shuld it growe ?*

Tyrwhitt's Chaucer, vol. i. p. 224.

It is remarkable, that the argument against virginity, contained in the last couplet, appears also in a Greek epigram by Paulus Silentarius, an author of the sixth century, who has described the church of Sancta Sophia at Constantinople in a very singular poem, and who says, in the epigram to which I allude,

*Virginity is wealth : but if by all  
This wealth were boarded, life itself must  
fall\*.*

Let me observe, for the credit of Chaucer,

\* Καλα τα παρθενικη κειμηλια. παρθενη δε,  
Τον βιον ωλεσεν αν, πασι φυλαττομενη.

Anthologia Lubini, 4to. page 43.

that

that he appears desirous of atoning for the freedom with which he had treated virgins of every class, by his verses on that marvellous holy maid St. Cæcilia; a composition in which he engaged, if we may believe the following introduction to it, to preserve himself from the perils of licentious indolence:

*And for to put us from swiche idelnesse,  
That cause is of so gret confusion,  
I have here don my feithful besynesse,  
After the Legende, in translation  
Right of thy glorious lif and passion,  
Thou, with thy gerlond wrought of rose and  
lilie,  
Thee mene I, maid and martir, Seinte Cecilie.*

Tyrwhitt's Chaucer, vol. iii. p. 65.

But if Chaucer appears to have failed now and then, in his veneration towards the sisterhood, his transgressions against the chaste community are very trivial, when compared with those of Shakespeare. The  
Old

Old Maid may applaud herself for possessing a charitable spirit, if she perfectly forgives this saucy prince of dramatic poets for the following passage in his comedy of "All's well that Ends Well."

"It is not politic in the commonwealth  
"of nature to preserve virginity. Loss  
"of virginity is rational increase; and  
"there was never virgin got, till virginity  
"was first lost. That you were made of,  
"is metal to make virgins. Virginity, by  
"being once lost, may be ten times found;  
"by being ever kept, is ever lost: 'tis too  
"cold a companion; away with it! There's  
"little can be said in't, 'tis against the rule  
"of nature. To speak on the part of vir-  
"ginity, is to accuse your mothers; which  
"is most infallible disobedience. He that  
"hangs himself is a virgin; virginity mur-  
"ders itself; and should be buried in high-  
"ways, out of all sanctified limit, as a des-  
"perate offendress against nature. Virgi-  
"nity breeds mites, much like a cheese;  
"consumes itself to the very paring, and so  
"dies



"dies with feeding its own stomach. Be-  
 "sides, virginity is peevish, proud, idle,  
 "made of self-love, which is the most in-  
 "hibited sin in the canon. Keep it not,  
 "you cannot chuse but lose by't: out  
 "with't! Within ten years it will make it-  
 "self two, which is a goodly increase, and  
 "the principal itself not much the worse—  
 "away with't!—'Tis a commodity will lose  
 "the gloss with lying; the longer kept, the  
 "less worth:—off with't while 'tis vendible!  
 "answer the time of request. Virginity,  
 "like an old courtier, wears her cap out of  
 "fashion; richly suited, but unsuitable:  
 "just like the brooch and the toothpick,  
 "which wear not now. Your date is better  
 "in your pye and your porridge than in  
 "your cheek: and your virginity, your  
 "old virginity, is like one of our French  
 "withered pears: it looks ill: it eats  
 "dryly:—marry, 'tis a wither'd pear: it  
 "was formerly better: marry, yet 'tis a  
 "wither'd pear \*."

\* All's Well that Ends Well, Act I. Scene 1.

Let

Let us observe, as an apology for our inimitable poet, that he has given us the preceding farcasms against the sisterhood as the language of a poltroon.

Since the personal history of Shakespeare, dark as it is, must be still peculiarly interesting to every English reader, let me hazard a few conjectures concerning it, that were suggested by the passage I have quoted.

Mr. Malone, in his very ingenious and amusing attempt to ascertain the order in which the plays of Shakespeare were written, has allotted the comedy of "All's Well that Ends Well" to the year 1598. I was at first inclined to suppose, that this elegant and accurate commentator was mistaken in this article, from an idea, that Shakespeare could not have written such an invective against old virginity in the reign of Elizabeth, who prided herself on being the queen of Old Maids. But, reflection has led me into a conjecture, which, fanciful as it may seem to others, to me appears

pears to confirm the date assigned by Mr. Malone to this comedy; and to give also additional spirit to the passage, as directly pointed against the queen herself, from an honest indignation of the poet in behalf of his great friend and patron the liberal earl of Southampton. Mr. Malone, in speaking of this nobleman, has observed, "that he attended lord Essex on the expedition to Cadiz, in 1597, as a volunteer, and afterwards to Ireland as general of the horse, from which employment he was dismissed by the peremptory orders of Queen Elizabeth, who was offended with him for having presumed to marry Miss Elizabeth Vernon [in 1596] without her majesty's consent."

Now it appears to me highly probable, that when his patron was thus injuriously treated by the antiquated maiden queen, merely for marrying a lovely young woman, it appears, I say, highly probable, that Shakespeare might at this juncture point all his wit, with a generous acrimony, against



*that old virginity*, which, equivocal as it was, his tyrannical sovereign considered as the highest of her titles. In the following year (1599) when Essex was in confinement, Lord Southampton and Lord Rutland (as we learn from a letter of that period) "came not to the court [at Non-such] but passed their tyme in London, "*merely in going to plaies every day* \*." If the comedy in question made a part of their entertainment, as it probably did, they must have enjoyed, with peculiar relish, this spirited caricatura of old virginity, as highly applicable to that malevolent, affected Old Virgin, who had so recently excited their anger and derision.

This conjecture may at first appear inconsistent with the tradition, that Shakespeare wrote *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in the year 1601, at the request of Elizabeth; yet it is possible, that her majesty might enjoin our poet to exhibit a carica-

\* Rowland Whyte's Letter to Sir Robert Sidney.

tura of love, in the person of Falstaff, to atone for the satirical freedom with which he had delineated old virginity in the speech of Parolles. We must at the same time confess, that this imperious Old Maid would have probably corrected the dramatist in a manner much more severe, had she ever suspected him of pointing his satire against her own princely person; although she owed him much indulgence for the sublime compliment which he had formerly paid her,

*“As a fair Vestal throned by the West \*.”*

But it is time to quit our uncertain conjectures on this inimitable sovereign of the drama, to speak with more certainty of a poet, who has treated the sisterhood with superior courtesy. I mean the gentle Spenser; who has not only celebrated the virginity of his queen, in the Introduction to his *Legend of Chastitie* †, but in his cha-

\* See Midsummer-Night's Dream.

† See the third Book of the Faerie Queene.

rafter of Belphebe has given us the following beautiful description of this female perfection.

*That daintie rose, the daughter of her morne,  
More deare than life she tendered, whose  
flowre  
The girland of her honour did adorne;  
Ne suffred she the middaye's scorching  
powre,  
Ne the sharp northerne wind thereon to  
showre;  
But lapped up her silken leaves most chaire,  
When so the froward skye began to lowre:  
But soone as calmed was the christall aire,  
She did it faire dispred, and let to florish faire.*

*Eternall God, in his almighty powre,  
To make ensample of his heavenly grace,  
In Paradise whilome did plant this flowre;  
Whence he it fetcht out of her native place,  
And did in stocke of earthly flesh enrace,  
That mortall men her glory should admire:  
In gentle ladies breste, and bounteous race  
Of womankind, it fairest flowre doth spire,  
And beareth fruit of honour and all chaste desire.*  
Fayre



*Fayre ympes of beautie, whose bright shining beames*

*Adorne the world with like to heavenly light,  
And to your willes both royalties and reames*

*Subdew, through conquest of your wondrous might !*

*With this faire flowre your goodly girlonds dight,*

*Of chastitie and vertue virginall,*

*That shall embellish more your beautie bright,  
And crowne your beades with heavenly coronall,*

*Such as the angels weare before Gods tribunall.*

*To your faire selves a faire ensample frame*

*Of this faire virgin, this Belphebe faire,*

*To whom, in perfect love and spotlesse fame*

*Of chastitie, none living may compaire :*

*Ne poysnous envy justly can empaire*

*The prayse of her fresh flowring mayden-head ;*

*For-thy she standeth on the highest staire*

*Of th' honourable stage of womanhead,  
That ladies all may follow her ensample dead\*.*

To these lines of Spenser I am tempted to add another portrait of virginity, by his neglected but spirited disciple Phineas Fletcher, who was once called the Spenser of his age. In his allegorical poem, intituled "The Purple Island," after giving a description of Agnia, or *Chastitie in the Married*, to use the words of his own illustration, he proceeds thus :

*With her, her sister went, a warlike maid,  
† Parthenia, all in steel and gilded arms ;  
In needle's stead a mighty spear she sway'd,  
With which in bloody fields, and fierce  
alarms,  
The boldest champion she down would bear,  
And like a thunderbolt wide passage tear,  
Flinging all to the earth with her enchanted  
spear.*

\* Faerie Queen, book iii. canto v.

† Chastitie in the Single.

*Her goodly armour seem'd a garden green,  
Where thousand spotlesse lilies freshly blew ;  
And on her shield the 'lone bird might be seen,  
Th' Arabian bird, shining in colours new ;  
Itself unto itself was onely mate,  
Ever the same, but new in newer date,  
And underneath was writ, Such is chaste  
single state \*.*

After a long description of this heroine,  
the poet concludes her character in the fol-  
lowing stanza :

*A thousand knights woo'd her with busie  
pain ;  
To thousand she her virgin grant denied ;  
Although, her dear-sought love to entertain,  
They all their wit and all their strength  
applied :  
Yet in her heart Love close his scepter sway'd,  
That to an heavenly spouse her thoughts  
betraid,  
Where she a maiden wife might live, and  
wifely maid.*

\* The Purple Island, Canto x. edit. 1633, p. 141.



But of all the poetical compliments that virginity has received, none, I think, are so truly beautiful and sublime, as those which have proceeded from the chaste enthusiasm of Milton. Let the reader judge from the following passages of Comus.—The elder brother, in speaking of his lost sister, says,

*She has a bidden strength,*

— — — — —  
*Which if Heaven gave, it may be term'd her own :*

*'Tis Chastity, my brother, Chastity :*

*She that has that is clad in complete steel,*

*And, like a quiver'd nymph with arrows keen,*

*May trace huge forests and unharbour'd heaths,*

*Infamous hills, and sandy perilous wilds,*

*Where, through the sacred rays of Chastity,*

*No savage fierce, bandite, or mountaneer,*

*Will dare to soil her virgin purity :*

*Yea there, where very desolation dwells,*

*By grots, and caverns shagg'd with horrid shades,*

*She*

*She may pass on, with unblench'd majesty,  
Be it not done in pride or in presumption.—  
Some say, no evil thing that walks by night  
In fog, or fire, by lake, or moorish fen,  
Blue meager hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost,  
That breaks his magic chains at curfeu time ;  
No goblin, or swart faery of the mine,  
Hath hurtful pow'r o'er true virginity.—  
Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call  
Antiquity from the old schools of Greece  
To testify the arms of Chastity ?  
Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow,  
Fair silver-shafted queen, for ever chaste,  
Wherewith she tam'd the brinded lions  
And spotted mountain pard, but set at nought  
The frivolous bolt of Cupid ; Gods and men  
Fear'd her stern frown, and she was queen o'  
th' woods.*

*What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield  
That wise Minerva wore, unconquer'd virgin,  
Wherewith she freez'd her foes to congeal'd  
stone,*

*But rigid looks of chaste austerity,  
And noble grace, that dash'd brute violence*

*With*

*With sudden adoration and blank awe?  
 So dear to Heaven is saintly Chastity,  
 That when a soul is found sincerely so,  
 A thousand liveried angels lacky her,  
 Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,  
 And in clear dream and solemn vision  
 Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear,  
 Till oft converse with heavenly habitants  
 Begin to cast a beam on th' outward shape,  
 The unpolluted temple of the mind,  
 And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,  
 Till all be made immortal\*.*

Again, the lady herself, in her address to Comus, vindicates, with great spirit, the dignity and power of maiden excellence.

*To him that dares  
 Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous  
 words  
 Against the sun-clad power of Chastity,  
 Fain would I something say; yet to what end?  
 Thou hast nor ear nor soul to apprehend*

\* Comus, ver. 415.



*The sublime notion and high mystery,  
That must be uttered to unfold the sage  
And serious doctrine of Virginity.*

While we admire the transcendant grace and energy of Milton's language, let us remark, in justice to an elder and admirable poet of our country, that most of the preceding ideas, which relate to the prerogatives of the genuine and confirmed virgin, are copied from that neglected but very beautiful pastoral drama, the Faithful Shepherdess of Fletcher. In this drama, Clorin, a tender and pious nymph, having buried her lover, and being determined to die an Old Maid, resides by his grave in a wood, and is attended by a modest and obedient satyr. The cause of this obedience, from such a creature, she expresses in the following speech; to which Milton has paid the highest honour, by more than one imitation of it.

*What greatness, or what private hidden power  
Is there in me, to draw submission*

*From*

*From this rude man and beast?—Sure I was  
mortal,*

*The daughter of a shepherd; he was mortal;  
And she that bore me mortal: Prick my hand,  
And it will bleed; a fever shakes me, and  
The self-same wind that makes the young lambs  
shrink*

*Makes me a-cold; my fear says I am mortal:  
Yet I have heard (my mother told it me)  
And now I do believe it, if I keep  
My virgin flower uncropt, pure, chaste, and  
fair,*

*No goblin, wood-god, fairy, elf, or fiend,  
Satyr, or other power that haunts the groves,  
Shall hurt my body, or by vain illusion  
Draw me to wander after idle fires,  
Or voices calling me in dead of night,  
To make me follow, and so tole me on,  
Through mire and standing pools, to find my  
ruin;*

*Else, why should this rough thing, who never  
knew*

*Manners, nor smooth humanity, whose heats  
Are rougher than himself, and more mishapen,  
Thus*

*Thus mildly kneel to me? Sure there's a power  
In that great name of virgin, that binds fast  
All rude uncivil bloods, all appetites  
That break their confines: then, strong Chastity,  
Be thou my strongest guard, for here I'll dwell,  
In opposition against Fate and Hell\*.*

We find in the same drama, that the poet has ingeniously availed himself of the popular opinion concerning the medical power of the true maiden. His holy shepherdess, Clorin, says, in describing herself,

*Of all green wounds I know the remedies,  
In men or cattle, be they stung with snakes,  
Or charm'd with powerful words of wicked art,  
Or be they love-sick, or through too much heat  
Grown wild or lunatic, their eyes or ears  
Thicken'd with misty film of dulling rheum;  
These I can cure, such secret virtues lie  
In herbs, applied by a virgin's hand †.*

The salutary influence ascribed to virginity appears to have been very extensive.

\* The Faithful Shepherdess, act i. sc. 1. † Ibid.



In the old poem on Sir Bevis of Southampton, we find that noble knight preserved from his enemy, the dragon, by luckily stumbling into a well of miraculous purity :

*For some time dwelled in that land  
A virgin full of Christes sand,  
That had been bathed in that well,  
That ever after, as men can tell,  
Might no venomous worme come therein,  
By the virtue of that virgin\*.*

But the idea that medical powers belong to the true maiden, though it was cherished by our romances of chivalry, and still more by our monastic legends, did not first arise from modern superstition. We learn from a passage in Ælian, that some of the ancients admitted even the apparel of a genuine maid among the articles of their materia medica ; nor did they suppose the efficacy of this singular medicine confined to the human frame. That dreadful disease

\* Warton's Essay on Spenser, page 50. vol. i.

of man, which has been supposed, both in England and France, to admit of no cure, but from the touch of the sovereign, might be healed, according to the opinion of the ancients, by the purer hand of virginity. But as these maidenly remedies have long ceased to be fashionable in the medical world, I shall not swell these volumes by enumerating the different maladies to which they were applied, or the various modes of application.

Ceasing, therefore, to consider virginity as a nostrum, let us proceed to remark, that it has sometimes been the patient, as well as the instrument, of quacks. It is one of the most striking foibles in man, that he will often attempt to ascertain, by insufficient tests, many doubtful points, which it would be much wiser to admit entirely upon trust. Hence have arisen many fanciful and fallacious devices to prove the integrity of a virgin. Pliny the naturalist informs us, that the stone Gagates of Lycia was used for this curious experiment; and

Albertus Magnus is still more explicit in speaking of its wonderful property \*. A similar power of proving the fidelity of a wife is ascribed to the magnet, in the pleasing little Greek poem on precious stones, which bears the name of Orpheus †.

But the most surprising evidence, that ever bore testimony against a frail woman, was a bird called Porphyrio, which is said to have had so delicate a sense of honour, that it put an end to its own existence, if its mistress offended against the laws of chastity ‡.

On this subject we ought not to omit the serpent kept in a temple of Juno, which disdained to accept any food unless offered by the pure hand of a virgin. This dainty

\* De Miner. lib. ii. De Gagete—aiunt autem de expertis esse, quod si colatura, et ejus lotura cum rasura detur virgini, bibita retinebit eam, quod non minget; si autem non est virgo, statim minget: et sic debet probari an aliqua sit virgo.

† Ver. 319, p. 44, edit. Tyrwhitt.

‡ Athenæus, lib. ix.—Ælian, lib. iii. cap. 42,

animal



animal is mentioned by Ælian, and alluded to by the poet Propertius, who tells us, in elegant and picturesque verses, of which the following are an imperfect copy,

*In pale suspense the fearful damsels gaz'd,  
Who to the serpent's mouth rash offerings rais'd;  
From the chaste maid the proffer'd food he  
takes,  
While in her trembling hand the basket shakes\*.*

In the Greek romances we find various trials of virginity circumstantially described. Chariclia, the heroine of Heliodorus, is represented by that elegant and lively writer as passing with intrepid innocence through a fiery ordeal. The lovely maiden, arrayed in a Delphic robe, with her hair dishevelled, and with a countenance expressing religious transport, leaps on a blazing altar, and

\* *Talia demissæ pallent ad sacra puellæ,  
Cum temerè angineo creditur ore manus :  
Ille sibi admotas a virgine corripit escas ;  
Virginis in palmis ipsa canistra tremunt.*

Propertius, lib. iv. eleg. 8:

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I

stands

stands unhurt amid the flames, attracting universal admiration, as more like a Divinity than a mortal \*.

Achilles Tattius has delineated a scene of a similar kind, still more picturesque. He tells us, that in a grove belonging to Diana there was a cave of peculiar sanctity devoted to Pan. Just within the portal of this cave a miraculous pipe was suspended, formed of those reeds into which the nymph Syrinx was metamorphosed, when she fled from the wanton pursuit of the rustic God.

A wondrous power resided in this pipe, and rendered it an unquestionable test of maiden innocence. Whenever a true virgin entered the cave, sounds of the sweetest melody proceeded from this instrument; but if one who had lost her purity was rash enough to approach it, the pipe continued silent, and, instead of music, a groan of lamentation was sent forth from the cave.

Leucippe, the heroine of Tattius, being

\* Heliodori Æthiop. lib. x.

accused

accused of impurity, is brought to ascertain either her guilt or innocence by this awful experiment. She is furrounded by solicitous spectators: her malignant accuser, her anxious father, and her lover, suffering still stronger agitation—confident, indeed, in the virtue of his mistress, yet trembling lest she might suffer from the wantonness of Pan. Thus attended, the virgin, with a meek and modest, yet intrepid dignity, descends into the cave. What a group for the pencil! New pictures succeed.—The doors of the cave now close upon her. What a moment of universal anxiety!—The pipe begins to sound with peculiar sweetness—the doors unfold, and the virgin ascends to honour and to love. What a scene of triumph and ecstasy for her father and her future husband!

In the same romance we have another trial of virgin purity, intitled, “The Trial of the Stygian Fountain.” The ceremonial of it is thus described:—A maiden accused of impurity swears that the accusation is false.

I 2

Her



Her oath is inscribed on a small tablet, and, with this suspended to her neck, she descends into the fountain. If she has sworn falsely, the water begins to swell, and rises till, reaching her neck, it overwhelms the tablet; but, if she is a genuine maid, the placid water continues below her knee, and the triumphant virgin, having remained her appointed time in the fountain, is led out of it by the applauding priest\*.

In the romance, which bears the name of the learned bishop Eustathius, a similar trial occurs. That amusing author describes a temple of Diana, in which was a golden statue of the Goddess bending her bow; at her feet flowed a murmuring fountain, by which the chaste Divinity used to prove the innocence of her votaries. The suspected virgin was conducted into this mysterious water with a crown of laurel on her head. If she was really pure, the Goddess did not extend her bow, the water

\* Achilles Tatius, lib. viii.

remained

remained calm, and the maiden passed quietly through it, retaining her laurel crown on her head; but if (to copy the expression of Eustathius) the breath of Venus had extinguished her virgin lamp, Diana directed her bow against the pretended virgin, and seemed to aim at her head. The affrighted culprit hid herself in the stream to avoid the shaft, and her laurel wreath was washed off by the murmuring water\*.

Incidents of this kind seem to belong to romance; yet the learned editor of Eustathius, in a note to this story, has produced a similar anecdote from a grave historian. He quotes a passage from an unpublished Greek chronicle of Constantinople, which informs us, that a statue of Venus in that city had this formidable attribute of discovering the foibles of the fair: it ascertained the purity of married women and of virgins, both rich and poor; but at last, says the chronicle, the sister of Justin's wife de-

\* Eustathius de Ismenia et Ismenes Amoribus, lib. viii.

stroyed the statue for having detected her frailty \*.

The only remains of these superstitious and fantastic trials of virginity, that have descended to our more refined and enlightened age, appear in the common jest of trying to rekindle by the breath an extinguished candle. Pasquier, the learned French antiquarian, has written a chapter on this sportive custom: he does not, indeed, attempt to discover its origin, but gravely takes occasion from the idea to assert the despicable emptiness of all animal pleasure, and to affirm, on the authority of Tertulian, that the happiness of woman consists in her virginity †.

I shall close this miscellaneous chapter by acquainting the chaste sisterhood with many vain attempts that I have made to elucidate a very mysterious proverb, by which their whole order is preposterously condemned to a very strange and unworthy

\* Eustathius Gaulmini, Notarum, p. 37.

† Pasquier, Recherches, lib. viii. chap. 22.

destiny;



destiny ; I mean the proverb, which says, that Old Maids are doomed “to lead apes “in hell.” After consulting the profoundest antiquarians of our own country, and some upon the continent, I am still unable to ascertain the origin of this remarkable saying. One of my ingenious friends is convinced that it was invented by the Monks, to allure opulent females into the cloister, by teaching them, that if they did not become the spouses either of man or God, they must expect to be united, in a future world, to the most impertinent and disgusting companion. For my own part, I am inclined to rank an idea so injurious to my fair friends among the dismal and despicable superstitions of Ægypt, as I find a passage in Hermes Trismegistus, which says, that those who die childless are, immediately after their death, tormented by demons \*. I must confess, however, that from the very high respect which the Ægyptians entertained for the ape, the

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demons intended by Trismegistus could hardly be of that figure. Indeed, the affectionate adoration which apes have sometimes received, as we learn from the pious poet Prudentius \*, has at times led me to conjecture, that the saying in question might have arisen in some country where it bore a very different meaning from what we annex to it at present; where this destiny of the ancient virgin was intended, not as the punishment, but the reward of her continence.

That the ape, though a wanton animal, was sometimes considered by the Pagans as a servant to the Goddess of Chastity, we learn from Strabo, who tells us there was a temple of Diana in which apes were said to dance on her festival.

I do not recollect to have seen the expression of *leading apes* in any of our very early English writers. The lively Beatrice of

\* Venerem precaris, comprecare et finiam.

Prudentius.

Shakespeare

Shakespeare alludes more than once to this humiliating destiny of the antiquated maiden; and Delia, in Shirley's comedy, called *The School of Compliments*, 1637, talks also of being condemned to *lead apes in hell*.

A living poet of our country seems to have wished to make the sisterhood amends for the insult of this injurious proverb, by assigning a place to Old Maids in his poetical elysium. As the friend and advocate of the chaste community, I transcribe with singular pleasure the following verses, in which their neglected merits are so liberally distinguished.

*" Turn to this chearful band, and mark in this*

*" Spirits who justly claim my realms of bliss !*

*" Most lovely these ! when judg'd by generous*

*" truth,*

*" Tho' beauty is not theirs, nor blooming*

*" youth ;*

*" For these are they, who, in life's thorny*

*" shade,*

*" Repin'd not at the name of ancient maid.*

*" No*

" No proud disdain, no narrowness of heart,  
 " Held them from Hymen's tempting rites apart;  
 " But fair discretion led them to withdraw  
 " From the priz'd honour of his proffer'd law;  
 " To quit the object of no hasty choice  
 " In mild submission to a parent's voice;  
 " The valued lover with a sigh resign,  
 " And sacrifice delight at duty's shrine.  
 " With smiles they bore, from angry spleen  
     " exempt,  
 " Injurious mockery and coarse contempt:  
 " 'Twas theirs to clasp, each selfish care above,  
 " A sister's orphans with parental love,  
 " And all her tender offices supply,  
 " Though bound not by the strong maternal tie;  
 " 'Twas theirs to bid intestine quarrels cease,  
 " And form the cement of domestic peace:  
 " No throbbing joy their spotless bosom fir'd,  
 " Save what Benevolence herself inspir'd;  
 " No praise they sought, except that praise  
     " refin'd,  
 " Which the heart whispers to the worthy  
     " mind \*."

\* Hayley's Triumphs of Temper, canto v. ver. 563.

†

CHAP.



CHAP. II.

*Containing the Discussion of a very delicate and important Question.*

AS good fortune has thrown into my hands a manuscript oration on a topic highly interesting to the sisterhood, I shall insert it in this chapter; and, to gratify, to the utmost of my power, the curiosity of my fair readers, I shall introduce it by a little history of the incidents which have enabled me to enrich my work with so singular an embellishment.

A few years ago I had the happiness of ranking among my friends a gentleman of the most amiable singularity. He was a baronet of an ancient family, and very ample possessions, in the North of England. His father, who had all the convivial spirit so prevalent in that part of our island, paid a very heavy tax for his bacchanalian enjoyments,

" No proud disdain, no narrowness of heart,  
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joyments, in suffering the frequent visits of an excruciating gout, and in dying at last a martyr of the bottle. My friend Sir Hilary Highman had all the natural vivacity of his father ; he loved pleasure as well, but, warned by so striking an example, he resolved to pursue it, though with equal ardour, yet in paths of less peril.

While his father was yet living, he discovered in his own frame, young as it was, some traces of that formidable distemper, to which parental intemperance had given him too good a title. This tendency he wisely determined to counteract, by a steady adherence to the most simple diet. Yet, as he was unwilling to irritate the growing ill-humour of a parent, whom he tenderly regarded, he engaged not in this degenerate regimen, till he had taken leave of the jovial, testy, and crippled old gentleman, to embark in a favourite project of visiting the ruins of Greece. An opposite conduct might have endangered his future fortune ; as the impetuous old toper detested the character

character of a milkop, and would not, perhaps, have scrupled to disinherit a son, merely for renouncing that festive poison, which had destroyed his own temper, and was rapidly preying on the dregs of his exhausted life. My friend, indeed, when he set out on his travels, relying on the strength of his father's constitution, entertained a very lively hope of amusing the old knight, on his return, with a history of his adventures. But the fates determined otherwise. A long scene of election festivity hurried this hearty friend of Bacchus to the grave; and the temperate Sir Hilary was recalled from the ruins of Athens, to take possession of an estate large enough to furnish every kind of luxury to an attic imagination. Abstemious as he was, Sir Hilary was a genuine disciple of Epicurus; he considered pleasure as the universal aim of every sensible being; but the pleasure he courted was only such as arises from the indulgence of an elegant fancy and a benevolent heart. He was particularly

particularly fond of female society ; and his passions were vehement, though tender ; a Grecian lady, of exquisite beauty and accomplishments, inflamed them to the highest degree, and he had been privately married to her many months, when the intelligence arrived which recalled him to his country. The delights arising from his new connection, and the general state of his father's ruined health and temper, allowed him not to feel any great poignancy or grief, though he frequently spoke of the departed old gentleman with a grateful and tender regret. Sir Hilary was far from shewing any eagerness to take possession of the princely opulence which had now devolved to him. His affectionate attention to his lovely Greek, rendered his travels homeward particularly slow. This fair partner of his fortune was advanced in pregnancy. Her husband would have kindly waited the event on the coast of Asia Minor, of which she was a native ; but it was settled, at the request of the lady, that they should



should proceed on their way to England as far as Rome, where she had the happiness of presenting to Sir Hilary two lovely boys, not inferior to the twin founders of the imperial city. The exulting mother soon recovered her strength with increasing loveliness; and the whole party arrived, with chequered sensations of joy and sorrow, at the paternal seat of Sir Hilary. The young baronet paid all decent honours to the memory of his father, and handsomely provided for a few old domestics, who had shared both the joviality and the infirmities of their late master. He soon began to new-model his house, and to regulate his establishment. In both it was his chief aim to unite elegance with comfort, and gaiety with temperance. He built a very spacious library, with an adjoining saloon; the latter was well furnished with a few admirable pictures, and the former completely enriched with books, busts, and statues. Sir Hilary had imbibed very early an extreme passion for Grecian literature, which the incidents  
of

of his life had tended to increase. He particularly admired that cast of conversation which used to form the most delightful part of an ancient attic entertainment, and he often wished to substitute something of this nature in the room of those dull or disgusting topics of discourse, which produce such a heavy effect in the rural visits of our English gentry. He was a hearty friend to every harmless, social pleasure; but he wished to give a little tincture of literary refinement to his convivial neighbourhood. This was no easy task; yet Sir Hilary accomplished it: and indeed there is hardly any enterprize too hard for a man, who possessed, as he did, engaging manners with warm philanthropy, and a very abundant portion of opulence and wit. Events, however, happened luckily to facilitate his design. On his extensive estate there were two livings of considerable value; they had been occupied by two orthodox toppers, promoted by the old baronet for their uniform adherence to the bottle. These honest di-  
vines

vines had drank so deeply together to the memory of the good old knight, that they soon finished their last bumper on earth, and slept in peace with their patron. Sir Hilary seized, with great pleasure, this opportunity of settling in his neighbourhood two gentlemen whose habits of life were congenial with his own. He was happy in bestowing ease and independence on two liberal men, with whom he had contracted an intimacy at college, and who had been the associates of his early studies. They were persons of equal integrity, but of different characters. Literature was the passion of each; but the first valued learning only as it led him to the serious practice of virtue; the second loved it as the most pleasing exercise of an active and playful spirit. Opposite as they were in their dispositions, they had a perfect esteem for each other, and for the amiable patron, who considered their society as one of the highest gratifications that propitious fortune had bestowed upon him. These clerical friends

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were



were both in the prime of life; and, as they were both unmarried, they were particularly careffed by the families around them. By the aid of these gentlemen, with a third clergyman, who resided under his roof as a domestic chaplain, and his assistant in the education of his children, Sir Hilary commenced an institution, which contributed not a little to the amusement of himself and his acquaintance. At the full of every moon, it was his custom to give a very elegant entertainment to the gentry of his neighbourhood. On these days, in the interval between tea and supper, orations were read or spoken in the spacious library, on a subject proposed at the preceding assembly. It was the banquet of Plato, an author in whom Sir Hilary delighted, that first inspired him with this idea: and in these English dialogues the moral spirit of that sublime Grecian was sometimes very happily copied, without any mixture of the gross indecency, with which the most engaging of his productions is miserably disgraced.

Sir

Sir Hilary did not confine his entertainment to prosaic discourses ; but professed himself equally obliged to those guests, who produced either a prose dissertation, or a poetical *jeu d'esprit* on the topic of the day. The verses were deposited on a large library table, and usually read by Sir Hilary's secretary, who acted as clerk to the assembly, before the orations began ; which were generally delivered by their respective authors, and sometimes without any premeditation. Extempore verses, composed upon the spot, were also kindly received ; and if thrown on the table while the assembly was sitting, they were read by the clerk, when the orations were closed, as a kind of epilogue to the amusements of the day.

I happened to meet my old acquaintance Sir Hilary in London, at a time when I was greatly reduced by a severe and lingering illness. He kindly insisted on my passing a few weeks with him at his country seat, in the friendly hope of contributing to the recovery of my health, affirming, with his

usual pleasantries, that one of his attic banquets would prove to me a nervous cordial; and conduce, more than the most fashionable medicines, to the revival of a literary invalid. My friend's institution was now indeed in a very flourishing state. Sir Hilary had, by degrees, diffused around his neighbourhood a spirit of amicable and elegant emulation. He had particularly caressed and animated the young people in the genteel families around him, and in the course of a few years he had formed, in his assembly, a little band of orators, whom Athens herself might have listened to with pleasure. The ladies, though they never so far forgot the delicacy of their sex as to declaim in these meetings, yet contributed not a little to the general amusement, by various compositions.

As to myself, I wished in vain for powers to take an active part in the pleasing ceremony of the place; but my health was still so weak, that I dared not venture on any kind of mental exertion. I had, however,  
before



before this period, conceived the first idea of my present work, and, wishing to derive all the advantages I could from this accomplished society, I requested my friend Sir Hilary to propose the following question as a subject of debate in one of his assemblies : —“ Which is the more eligible for a wife, “ a Widow, or an Old Maid ?” —My lively friend very chearfully acquiesced in my proposal; and the topic gave birth to much innocent pleasantry, and to some serious argument. I heartily wish it were in my power to enrich these volumes with many of the pieces, both in prose and rhyme, that were produced on this occasion ; but all that I was allowed to treasure up, amounts only to three epigrams, and a single oration. It is, however, the very oration that I was most solicitous to obtain ; for, alas ! with grief I confess, that although seven orators harangued upon the question, one alone had generosity enough to argue on the side of the neglected sisterhood ; with what powers of rhetoric, my reader will very soon have

the opportunity of judging. I shall first produce the poetical *jeux d'esprit*. The first of the three following epigrams was found, with other pieces of poetry, on the library table, and were recited, according to the ceremonial I have mentioned, before the orations began; the others were literally produced extempore, and of course were not read till the speeches were closed; but as they arose from the preceding epigram, I shall here insert them united.

## E P I G R A M

On this Question,

“ Which is the more eligible for a Wife,  
“ a Widow, or an Old Maid ? ”

*Ye, who to wed the sweetest wife would try,  
Observe how men a sweet Cremona buy !  
New violins they seek not from the trade,  
But one, on which some good musician play'd :  
Strings never try'd some harshness will produce ;  
The fiddle's harmony improves by use.*

IMPROMPTU

IMPROMPTU

On the preceding Epigram.

*One rule will Wives and Fiddles fit,  
Is falsely said, I fear, by wit,  
To sad experience blind:  
For Woman's an Æolian harp,  
Whose every note, or flat or sharp,  
Depends upon the wind.*

A REPLY

To the two Epigrammatists.

*Fiddles and Harps no more compare  
(Improper symbols!) to the Fair,  
However they attract!  
Ye wits! for Woman let me see,  
If Music will not yield to me,  
Justly to grace  
The female race,  
An image more exact!*

*Woman, I say, or dame or lass,  
Is an Harmonica of glass,  
Celestial and complete:*



*If new, or by some trials known,  
It matters not  
A single jot ;  
When rightly touch'd, its every tone  
Is ravishingly sweet.*

There were other verses recited, of a more serious cast. Some juvenile bards wandered a little from the subject; and a young Oxonian forgot the respect due to both parties concerned in the question; for, instead of deciding the point in debate, he satirized both the Widow and the Old Maid with much sarcastic wit, and concluded with a most animated panegyric on a blooming girl of eighteen.

More than one poet, however, pleaded the cause of the Widow with energy and pathos; but the frail nymphs of Parnassus were so unfriendly to the claims of the elderly virgin sisterhood, that no bard appeared to sing decidedly in favour of the poor Old Maid; nor will this circumstance be thought surprising, when we recollect,

collect, that among the orators (a more reasonable set of men than the sportive sons of Apollo) the Old Maiden found only a single advocate. Of the six speakers who argued with vehemence for the Widow, the most amusing was a lively and honest fox-hunter, not remarkable for erudition, but possessed of strong mental powers in a robust constitution, and happy in a rich vein of original humour. This gentleman was actually in chace of a young, opulent, and lovely Widow. He gloried in this pursuit, and, being animated with the fairest prospect of success, he spoke with peculiar force and felicity on the topic of the day. I must confess, that he sometimes threw the audience into a kind of panic, by appearing to gallop very fast towards the precipice of indecency; but whenever he found himself on the brink of it, he rapidly made so delicate and dexterous a turn, that he converted the terrors of the company into ease, admiration, and good-humour.

The debate on this side of the question

was

was closed by a speaker of an opposite character. He was a gentleman of extensive learning and a grave deportment, yet easy in his address and forcible in his elocution. He gave us a serious yet entertaining history of widowhood, and enumerated the happy events, and the illustrious characters, to which the second marriage of some eminent Widows had given birth. When his peroration was ended, which, being tender and pathetic, formed a pleasing contrast to the humorous arguments of his predecessor, a gentleman arose, who possessed, with a very graceful person, an uncommon archness of countenance; and in a voice peculiarly melodious, he delivered the following oration:

“ Mr. President,

“ Though I was aware that a very formidable majority of speakers would appear against me, it is yet with confidence  
“ that I engage on the unpopular side of  
“ the present question; a question upon  
“ which



" which the prejudices, the passions, and  
 " the practice of mankind, are in direct  
 " opposition to the clearest dictates of rea-  
 " son and of justice ! Yes ! Sir, I will be  
 " so bold as to affirm, that if the conduct  
 " and the opinions of men were under the  
 " steady guidance of equity, this question  
 " could not remain doubtful for a single  
 " minute, in the mind of any man ; it must  
 " be decided, without a moment's hesita-  
 " tion, in favour of that injured, that de-  
 " rided being, the involuntary Old Maid,  
 " whose advocate I profess myself: nor  
 " would such a decision depend on any  
 " prior sentiments, which the arbiter might  
 " form, to the discredit, or to the glory, of  
 " wedlock ; for, whether we consider mar-  
 " riage as a burthen or as an enjoyment, it  
 " is equally unjust that any female should  
 " twice suffer that burthen, or be twice  
 " indulged in that enjoyment, while an-  
 " other, at the same period of life, is kept  
 " an utter stranger to the cares or to the  
 " delights of an important office, which  
 " she

" she is equally ready to assume, and  
 " equally able to support. This position  
 " is, I trust, so evident, that, if I could  
 " convert this assembly into the supreme  
 " court of judicature, and bring to its bar  
 " both the Widow and the Old Maid, as  
 " rival claimants of the nuptial coronet, on  
 " the mere principles of right, I am per-  
 " suaded the integrity of this audience  
 " would soon terminate the contest, and  
 " ratify the title of my client by an unani-  
 " mous decree. But alas! in this point  
 " there is no tribunal on earth, to which  
 " the disconsolate Old Maiden can success-  
 " fully apply for substantial justice. The  
 " clamour of prejudice is against her, and  
 " her pretensions are derided: while custom  
 " and commodity,

" " *That smooth-fac'd gentleman, tickling com-*  
 " *modity,*

" are such active and prosperous agents  
 " for her antagonist, the Widow, that she,  
 " this insidious antagonist! is admitted,  
 " perhaps,

“perhaps, three, four, or even five times  
 “to the recent altar of Hymen, while my  
 “unfortunate client, the neglected Old  
 “Maid, however wishfully she may look  
 “towards the portal, is not allowed to find  
 “even a temporary shelter within a por-  
 “tico of the temple.—Can this, Sir, be  
 “called equity? Is it not injustice? Is it  
 “not barbarity?—But I may be told, that in  
 “the common occurrences of life, in a trans-  
 “action such as marriage, peculiarly subject  
 “to fancy and caprice, we must not expect,  
 “we must not require men to observe the  
 “nicer dictates of strict equity, and a spe-  
 “culative rule of right.—Be it so!—I will  
 “not, therefore, on this important question,  
 “appeal solely to the consciences of men;  
 “I will appeal to their interests. I will  
 “prove to them, that he who marries an  
 “Old Maid, has a much greater chance of  
 “being invariably beloved by his wife, or,  
 “in other words, of being happy in wed-  
 “lock, than he has, who rashly throws  
 “himself into the open arms of a Widow.

“—Sir,



“ —Sir, I flatter myself, it will require no  
“ long chain of arguments to establish and  
“ fortify, on the most solid ground, this  
“ momentous position. I trust, that I shall  
“ be able to accomplish it, merely by re-  
“ minding this audience of a propensity in  
“ the human mind, which cannot be called  
“ in question; I mean the propensity to  
“ exalt in our estimation those possessions  
“ of which we are deprived, and to sink  
“ the value of what is actually in our  
“ hands.—Sir, the first part of this pro-  
“ pensity is so general, and it operates with  
“ such amazing force on the character to  
“ whom I wish to apply it, that I remem-  
“ ber the admirable Fielding, with a most  
“ happy coincidence of humour and of  
“ truth, calls the death of an husband ‘an  
“ infallible recipe to recover the lost af-  
“ fections of a wife.’

“ Let me, Sir, entreat this assembly to  
“ retain in their thoughts the propensity I  
“ have mentioned, and then to contemplate  
“ with me the feelings of the late Widow

I

“ towards

“ towards her second or third husband, and  
“ the feelings of the quondam Old Maid,  
“ now joyfully united to her first and only  
“ love.—Sir, the affection of the re-married  
“ Widow is a pocket telescope; she directs  
“ the magnifying end of it towards her  
“ good man in the grave, and it enlarges  
“ to a marvellous degree all the mental  
“ and all the personal endowments of the  
“ dear departed. She then turns the in-  
“ verted glass to his diminishing successor,  
“ and, whatever his proportion of excel-  
“ lence may be, the poor luckless living  
“ mortal soon dwindles in her sight to a  
“ comparative pigmy. But, Sir, this is  
“ not the case with our quondam Old  
“ Maid. No! Sir—her affection is a porta-  
“ ble microscope, which magnifies in a stu-  
“ pendous manner all the attractive merits  
“ and powers of pleasing, however incon-  
“ siderable they may be, in the favourite  
“ creature upon whom she gazes. Like  
“ an inexperienced but a passionate natura-  
“ list, she continues to survey the new and  
“ sole

“ sole object of her contemplation, not  
“ only with unremitted assiduity, but with  
“ increasing amazement and delight. He  
“ fills her eye; he occupies her mind; he  
“ engrosses her heart.

“ But it may be said in reply, If the  
“ man who marries an Old Maid has this  
“ superior chance of being uniformly be-  
“ loved by his wife, since it is certainly the  
“ wish of every man who marries to be so,  
“ how happens it that men decide so pre-  
“ posterously against themselves, and per-  
“ petually prefer the Widow to the Old  
“ Maid? Is not this constant preference a  
“ very strong argument in favour of the  
“ character so preferred? Does it not  
“ prove, that the Widow has acquired the  
“ art, or the power, of conferring more  
“ happiness on her second husband than  
“ the Old Maid is able to bestow upon her  
“ first? for can we suppose that men, in-  
“ structed by the experience of ages, would  
“ continue to act in constant opposition to  
“ their



"their own domestic happiness, in the  
"most important article of human life?

"Alas! Sir, I fear there are more arti-  
"cles than one, in which we inconsiderate  
"mortals may be frequently observed to  
"act against experience, against our rea-  
"son, and against our felicity. That the  
"Widow is constantly preferred to the Old  
"Maid, I most readily admit; nay, I  
"complain of it as an inveterate grievance;  
"but I trust, Sir, that I can account for  
"this unreasonable preference, without  
"adding a single grain to the weight, or  
"rather to the empty scale, of the Widow.

"I believe, Sir, a very simple meta-  
"phor will illustrate the whole affair on  
"both sides.

"The Widow is an experienced and a  
"skilful angler, who has acquired patience  
"to wait for the favourable minute, and  
"rapidity to strike in the very instant  
"when the fish has fairly risen to the hook.  
"By this double excellence her success is  
"ensured. But alas! Sir, the Old Maid

“ is an angler, whom fruitless expectation  
“ has rendered both impatient and unskill-  
“ ful; she is thrown into trepidation by  
“ the first appearance of a *nibble*, and by  
“ making a too hasty movement at that  
“ critical juncture, she too often renders  
“ her bait, however sweet it may be, an  
“ object of terror, instead of allurements,  
“ to what she wishes to catch. Though  
“ my allusion may sound a little coarsely,  
“ let me entreat you, Sir, not to imagine  
“ that I mean to express any degree of dis-  
“ respect to my honest and worthy client,  
“ the unprosperous Old Maid. Allow me,  
“ Sir, to remind you, that ingenuous and  
“ unhacknied spirits, though actively in-  
“ clined, are often reduced to do nothing,  
“ by their too eager desire to do well;  
“ and this is frequently the case of the  
“ good and delicate Old Maid, in her  
“ laudable project of securing a husband:  
“ so that even when she is herself the cause  
“ of her own failure in this worthy purpose,  
“ she deserves not our censure but our  
“ compassion.

"compassion. Yes! Sir, the partizans of  
 "the Widow may smile, if they please, at  
 "my assertion; but I scruple not to af-  
 "firm, that the solitary, neglected Old  
 "Maid is more truly entitled to pity, than  
 "soft harbinger of love, than the weeping  
 "Widow herself. Much has been said,  
 "and, I confess, with great eloquence, on  
 "the Widow's attractive sorrow. It is, in-  
 "deed, *attractive*; and so attractive, that  
 "it has frequently recalled to my imagi-  
 "nation the moan of the hyæna, that art-  
 "ful, destructive, and insatiable creature,  
 "who is said by the ancient naturalists to  
 "lure into her den, by a treacherous cry  
 "of distress, the unwary traveller whom  
 "she intends to devour. This insidious  
 "behaviour of the hyæna is a questionable  
 "fact, that no one, perhaps, can fully  
 "prove or refute; but all persons of any  
 "experience in the world have seen in-  
 "stances of men, who have been allured  
 "into the snare of the Widow, and have  
 "lamented, when it was too late to re-



“ treat, that they fell the victims of their  
“ own generous, but misplaced compassion.

“ The habit of changing is very apt to  
“ produce a passion for novelty; and the  
“ wife, who has buried one or two husbands, on a slight disagreement with her  
“ second or third, will soon wish him to  
“ sleep in peace with his departed predecessor, from her hope of being more  
“ lucky in her next adventure. You may  
“ remember, Sir, that our old poet Chaucer, that admirable and exact painter of  
“ life and manners! has very happily  
“ marked this prevalent disposition of the  
“ re-married Widow, in the long prologue  
“ which he assigns to his Wife of Bath.  
“ That good lady glories in having already buried four husbands, and expresses  
“ a perfect readiness, whenever Heaven  
“ may give her the opportunity, to engage  
“ with a sixth. Let it not be said, that this  
“ character is a mere phantom, created by  
“ the lively imagination of a satirical and  
“ facetious poet! No! Sir, this venerable,  
“ though

“ though sportive old bard, copied nature most faithfully: and, as a proof  
“ that he did so in the present case, I will  
“ mention a more marvellous example of  
“ this passion in the re-marrying Widow  
“ for an unlimited succession of novelties.  
“ Sir, the example I mean, is recorded in  
“ an ecclesiastical writer of great authority,  
“ whose name I cannot in this moment re-  
“ collect; but I remember he mentions it  
“ as a fact, which happened at Rome, and  
“ to which he was himself an eye-witness.  
“ This fact, Sir, was the marriage of a  
“ widow to her *twenty-second husband*. The  
“ man also had buried *twenty wives*; and  
“ all the eyes of Rome were fixed on this  
“ singular pair, as on a couple of gladiators,  
“ anxious to see which would conduct the  
“ other to the grave. If I remember  
“ right, the woman, after all her funeral  
“ triumphs, was the victim in this wonder-  
“ ful conflict: but the story, however it  
“ might terminate, sufficiently proves the  
“ passion for novelty, which I have ascribed

“ to the Widow. Now, Sir, if the second  
“ or third husband of a Widow may have  
“ frequent cause to imagine, that his lady’s  
“ transferrable affections are veering to-  
“ ward his probable successor, he cannot  
“ surely be so happy, or secure, as the man  
“ who has more wisely united himself to a  
“ worthy Old Maid. She, good soul ! re-  
“ membering how long she waited for her  
“ first husband, instead of hastily looking  
“ forward to a second, will direct all her at-  
“ tention to cherish and preserve the dear  
“ creature, whom she at last acquired after  
“ tedious expectation. Her good man has  
“ no rival to fear, either among the living  
“ or the dead, and may securely enjoy the  
“ delightful prerogative of believing him-  
“ self the absolute master of his wife’s af-  
“ fections. I entreat you, Sir, to observe  
“ how very different the case is with the in-  
“ considerate man, who rashly married a  
“ Widow ! He has not only to apprehend,  
“ that the changeable tenderness of his  
“ lady may take a sudden turn towards his  
“ probable



" probable successor, but, if her thoughts  
 " are too faithful, and too virtuous, to wan-  
 " der towards the living, even then, Sir,  
 " after all his endeavours to take full pos-  
 " session of her heart, though he may de-  
 " lude himself with the vain idea of being  
 " its sole proprietor, he will frequently find,  
 " that he has only entered into partnership  
 " with a ghost. Yes! Sir, though my op-  
 " ponents may treat the expression as ludi-  
 " crous, I will maintain that it is literally  
 " just. I repeat, he has entered into part-  
 " nership with a ghost, and I will add, Sir,  
 " the very probable consequence of such a  
 " partnership; he will soon find, that by  
 " the subtle illusions of his invisible partner,  
 " he has lost even his poor moiety in that  
 " precarious possession, the heart of a re-  
 " married Widow! and will find himself, at  
 " the same time, a real bankrupt in happi-  
 " nefs. Since my antagonists have been  
 " pleased to smile at my expression, as the  
 " language rather of fancy than of truth,  
 " suffer me, Mr. President, to quote a case,

“ in which this dead, this derided partner  
“ made his actual appearance, and was bold  
“ enough to urge an exclusive claim. Sir,  
“ I trust the case I allude to is a case di-  
“ rectly in point ; it is quoted, indeed, on  
“ a different occasion, by the admirable  
“ Addison, from the seventeenth book of  
“ the Jewish historian, Josephus. I mean  
“ the case of the Widow Glaphyra, who,  
“ having been twice a Widow, took for  
“ her third husband Archelaus. You may  
“ remember, Sir, that the thoughts of this  
“ lady, after her third adventure, ran so  
“ much on her first lord, that she saw the  
“ good man in a vision—‘ Glaphyra,’ said  
“ the phantom, ‘ thou hast made good the  
“ old saying, that women are not to be  
“ trusted. Was not I the husband of thy  
“ virginity ? Have I not children by thee ?  
“ How couldst thou forget our loves so far,  
“ as to enter into a second marriage, and  
“ after that into a third ?—But for our  
“ passed loves I will free thee from thy pre-  
“ sent reproach, and make thee mine for  
“ ever.’

“ever.’—Glaphyra related her dream, and  
 “died soon after. This, Sir, is a serious  
 “and tragical proof, how dangerous it is to  
 “marry a Widow. Surely no considerate  
 “man would chuse to incur the hazard of  
 “having his bride thus torn from his em-  
 “braces by so arrogant a phantom.—Al-  
 “low me, Sir, to relate a story of a comic  
 “cast, which will equally prove the secret  
 “perils of such a marriage. I received it  
 “from a very worthy old gentleman, not  
 “unknown to this assembly. He was ac-  
 “quainted, in his youth, with a famous  
 “mimic of the last century, who was the  
 “principal actor in this comic or rather  
 “farcical scene, and related it circumstani-  
 “tially to my friend. This mimic, Sir, a  
 “man of pleasantry and adventure, court-  
 “ed, in the early part of his life, a very  
 “handsome and opulent Widow; she gave  
 “him the highest encouragement; but, as  
 “avarice was her foible, she at last jilted  
 “him for a wealthy suitor, who, though  
 “of a very timid constitution, was rash  
 “enough



“ enough to marry this very tempting Wi-  
“ dow. The discarded mimic was inflamed  
“ with a variety of passions, and determined  
“ to take some very signal revenge. An  
“ opportunity of vengeance occurred to  
“ him, which, as he knew the extreme ti-  
“ midity of his fortunate rival, he seized  
“ without the pause of apprehension. His  
“ valet had intrigued with the favourite  
“ abigail of the Widow, and by her assist-  
“ ance the mimic commanded the nuptial  
“ chamber of the bride. He had known  
“ the person of her first husband, and, hav-  
“ ing concealed himself under a toilet, till  
“ the hour of consummation, he then made  
“ his appearance, assuming the most exact  
“ similitude, both in figure and voice, to  
“ the dear departed. He had hardly un-  
“ drawn the curtain, when the affrighted  
“ bride fell into a fit. The bridegroom,  
“ who had also known his deceased prede-  
“ cessor, was seized with a panic still worse,  
“ and the vehemence of his agitation served  
“ to recover the lady from her swoon. She  
“ revived

"revived in perfect possession of her senses,  
 "and, finding the dead husband vanished,  
 "and the living one unfit for a com-  
 "panion, she hastily arose. As she  
 "loved money, she had taken the prudent  
 "precaution of securing to herself the en-  
 "joyment of her own fortune, and, having  
 "some suspicion of the trick which had  
 "been played against her, she resolved to  
 "make a wise use of it, and declared,  
 "that she would never proceed to consum-  
 "mate her marriage with a man, who had  
 "not resolution enough to protect her  
 "from a ghost. She persisted in this con-  
 "duct, and the luckless derided bride-  
 "groom remained, through life, a melan-  
 "choly example to confirm the wisdom of  
 "that adage, which says, that he should,  
 "indeed, be a bold man, who enters into  
 "the service of a Widow.

"Sir, I should entreat your pardon for  
 "having trespassed on the patience of this  
 "assembly by the recital of so long a story,  
 "did I not flatter myself that it will have  
 "a happy

“ a happy tendency to guard the single  
“ gentlemen, who hear me, from the ini-  
“ quitous temerity of preferring a Widow  
“ to an old Maid.

“ I might alledge, Sir, many arguments  
“ which I have not hitherto touched upon,  
“ in favour of my client. I might shew  
“ of what infinite importance it is to ma-  
“ trimonial felicity, that the husband  
“ should receive into his arms a partner  
“ for life, whose disposition and habits, in-  
“ stead of being fixed already by a former  
“ lord, are yet to be moulded according  
“ to the will and abilities of her first and  
“ only director. Sir, in this point, the  
“ Widow is a piece of warped wood, which  
“ the most skilful workman may find him-  
“ self unable to shape as he wishes; but  
“ the Old Maid, Sir, is the pliant virgin  
“ wax, which follows, with the most happy  
“ ductility, every serious design, every in-  
“ genious device, every sportive whim, of  
“ the modeller.

“ But I will relinquish the innumerable  
“ arguments



"arguments that I might yet adduce in  
 "support of the Old Maid; I will rest her  
 "cause on that solid rock, which I have  
 "endeavoured, Sir, to exhibit in different  
 "points of view, I mean the superior se-  
 "curity with which her husband may de-  
 "pend on the stability of her affection. I  
 "will conclude by conjuring every gentle-  
 "man, who may happen to hesitate be-  
 "tween a Widow and an Old Maid, to  
 "remember, that reason and experience,  
 "that equity and the general interest of  
 "mankind, all loudly plead for his pre-  
 "ferring the latter: I will conjure him to  
 "recollect, that the man who marries a  
 "Widow has great cause to apprehend un-  
 "reasonable expectations, unpleasant com-  
 "parisons, and variable affection; while  
 "he, who marries an Old Maid, may with  
 "confidence prepare to meet unexact-  
 "ing tenderness, increasing gratitude, and per-  
 "petual endearments."

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I will

I will not presume to comment on the preceding oration; but merely add, that the ecclesiastical author, from whom the ingenious speaker has cited a most remarkable anecdote, is St. Jerom. It is contained in one of his epistles addressed to a Widow, whose name was Ageruchia. I shall transcribe the words of the saint at the bottom of the page \*, and close this chapter by re-

\* Rem dicturus sum incredibilem, sed multorum testimoniis approbatam. Ante annos plurimos, quum in chartis ecclesiasticis juvarem Damasum, Romanæ urbis episcopum, et Orientis atque Occidentis synodicis consultationibus responderem, vidi duo inter se paria, vilissimorum e plebe hominum comparata, unum qui viginti sepelisset uxores, alteram quæ vicesimum secundum habuisset maritum, extremo sibi, ut ipsi putabant, matrimonio copulatos. Summa omnium expectatio, virorum pariter ac feminarum, post tantas rudes, quis quem prius efferret: vicit maritus, et totius urbis populo confluente, coronatus, et palmam tenens, adoremque per singulos sibi acclamantes, uxoris multinubæ feretrum præcedebat.

Epist. Sancti Hieron. ad Ageruchiam,  
de Monogamia.

turning thanks to my eloquent friend, for the permission to print his speech, and by expressing a cordial wish, that my readers may bestow on it as much favour and applause, as it received from the amicable and polite assembly in which it was delivered.



## CHAP. III.

*The concluding Chapter of the Essay, containing a Sermon to Old Maids, delivered in a Dream.*

THE most sanguine projector that ever wasted his fortune and his brains in the smoke of expectation, never thought on the golden crown of all his labours with more assiduity and hope, than I have thought on the amusement and advantage, which, I trust, will accrue to the community of Old Maids from this elaborate Essay. The good spinsters have frequently engrossed me sleeping as well as waking. In proof of this affectionate assertion, I shall close my work with a circumstantial account of a very singular vision, which my extreme solicitude for their interest most certainly produced.

I had been reading, in a hot summer's day,

day, a little too soon after dinner, one of the Greek homilies on virginity ; when my attention gradually diminished, and sleep imperceptibly stole upon me. I found myself transported on a sudden from my own narrow study, and a little circle of dingy folios, to the middle of a large and magnificent apartment. It appeared to be the refectory of a very populous convent : at the upper end of it were two doors ; the one, which stood open, discovered to me a very elegant and extensive chapel ; the other, as I found in the sequel, led into a set of apartments appropriated to the lady abbess of this chaste but unfettered society. I was soon informed, by a group of courteous females, who were walking for the purposes of exercise and conversation in this spacious hall, that the ample and sumptuous fabric had been raised by the contribution of many elderly virgins, all of liberal birth and education, though unequal in their fortunes, who, forming themselves into a very numerous yet friendly commu-

nity, dwell together with quiet industry and social content.

"We are governed," said a kind and communicative sister of the house (who, with a disposition that appeared to me peculiarly angelical in an ancient virgin, expressed more eagerness to satisfy my curiosity than her own) "we are governed by a president of our own sex, who is annually elected by a majority of our sisterhood; but though we formally exert the privilege of election, we have never had but one and the same governess; for the lady who first planned, and has since directed, our society, is constantly rechosen into the delicate and important office, which she discharges to the satisfaction of all with whom she is connected." "How, madam," I exclaimed, "how may I obtain the happiness of beholding a personage so extraordinary?" "You will probably behold her very soon," replied my kind informer, "returning into this saloon from our adjoining chapel. You  
"may



“may distinguish,” she continued, “thro’  
“that open door, a distant party engaged  
“about the altar; among them you may  
“just discern our president Seraphina,  
“with her two favourite assistants, Mele-  
“sinda and Fuscina. They are employed  
“in a melancholy yet pleasing office, in  
“decorating the tomb of an amiable old  
“divine, who formed a part of our house-  
“hold, and was, indeed, to have appeared  
“in the character of our pastor; but as,  
“from motives of maidenly discretion, we  
“chose the good man in a very advanced  
“and infirm period of life, he has never  
“been able to ascend the pulpit prepared  
“for him. We were afraid of wounding  
“both him and ourselves, by appointing  
“any substitute for him, while we could  
“hope for his recovery, and have there-  
“fore subsisted hitherto without any acting  
“minister, except one selected from our-  
“selves, for the mere purpose of reading  
“the chapel service of the day; for we are  
“very punctual in our daily devotions; and,

“ now the good old man is departed, our  
“ president will probably soon chuse for us  
“ a preacher, who may fill more effectually  
“ the department of the deceased.” My  
pulse quickened as she spoke; but the  
mingled sentiments of surprise, joy, and  
ambition, rendered me unable to frame an  
immediate reply. Never did the hot peri-  
cranium of any dean or provost so itch and  
burn for an expected mitre, as mine did at  
this moment for a certain square cap of  
white velvet, adorned with a silver tassel,  
which now glittered in my view. It was  
suspended to the wall of the saloon, at the  
centre of the dining-table; and my good-  
natured informer, who observed with what  
an inquiring eye I surveyed it, very kindly  
told me, it was the work of their fair presi-  
dent, prepared as a mark of affectionate  
distinction for the pastor of this maiden  
flock. While this shining object of my  
chaste ambition still attracted my eyes, and  
I was still listening to several interesting  
little anecdotes concerning it, the lady ab-  
bess

ness and her attendants began to move towards me. My heart fluttered as they advanced. Though a considerable space was yet between us, I was struck with a trembling and speechless awe, by the air of complacent grandeur which appeared in the form and countenance of Seraphina. Never did a young volunteer, presented for the first time to the imperial Catherine of Russia, feel a more ardent, unutterable desire to serve his fair sovereign in the field or the cabinet, than I felt to recommend myself to the very different favours of this dignified lady. But how is it possible, thought I to myself, as she was approaching, to make her suddenly my patroness? Her character, and all her features, assure me, that she is utterly devoid of ambition and desire, those quick and powerful springs, by the means of which the fraternity of eloquent and able ministers have so often and so rapidly been exalted by the queens and abbesses of their respective countries. But there is a nobler passion,

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my heart inwardly said to itself, that, by actuating both of us alike, may facilitate my success with Seraphina; and this is our mutual zeal for the felicity of her fellow-maidens. Could this fair president of autumnal virgins be made acquainted with all that I have thought, and all that I have written, in behalf of Old Maids—but here's my difficulty and distress; how can I explain to her, in a few minutes, the long labours of my life?—While these ideas were passing, with confused rapidity, in my mind, Seraphina advanced very near to me. The mild dignity of her aspect extorted from me a bow of affectionate admiration. I made an imperfect effort to tell her so; but, before I could utter a single sentence to recommend myself, as I wished, to her favour, she saluted me by my name, to my infinite astonishment; and proceeded to inform me, with a graceful and engaging familiarity, that the departed minister was one of my old friends, who had given her a complete idea both of my person and my character,

character, expressing a wish on his death-bed, in the most flattering terms, that I might be chosen to succeed him in the pastoral care of this sisterhood. "We are no "strangers," continued the polite Sera-  
phina, "to the benevolent cast of your stu-  
"dies, and we look with peculiar gratitude  
"on a person, whose pen has been long  
"employed, with a very singular humanity,  
"to amuse, to instruct, and, I may say, to  
"honour, a certain class of females, whom  
"the unthinking world have incessantly  
"wounded with derision or neglect. It is  
"possible, Sir," she added, "that your  
"book, to which I allude, however en-  
"riched and adorned with learning and  
"with fancy, with reason and with wit; it  
"is possible, I say, that this book may not  
"find more kindness from the world,  
"than what has hitherto attended the  
"degraded order of beings to whom it  
"is so generously devoted. But, what-  
"ever fate may attend your work, whose  
"merits have been fully explained to us,

“ we shall at least enjoy the happiness of  
“ securing you from many of those humili-  
“ liating personal evils, to which the great-  
“ est authors have been exposed, if you  
“ will allow us to appoint you the preacher  
“ of our chapel.”

Seraphina paused for my reply ; but my head and heart were too full to allow me the use of speech in the first moments of my surprise and exultation. I made her the profoundest reverence, that a body not perfectly elastic could accomplish. It was as low as the bow of a new-created bishop to his earthly maker, yet, I fear, it was not so much the genuine movement of humility, as of pride.

Seraphina seemed to read all my sentiments, and, to relieve me from the perplexing difficulty of putting my thanks into proper words, she thus pursued her discourse.

“ It is now the usual hour of our morn-  
“ ing prayers: will you allow me, Sir, the  
“ pleasure of introducing you to your new  
“ office ?



“ office? You will find the books of our  
 “ chapel in order; and I doubt not but, as  
 “ you have long meditated on the good and  
 “ evil of our single state, you can oblige us,  
 “ on the instant, with a sermon adapted to  
 “ our sequestered condition.”—Much as I  
 was elated by the flattering appointment, I  
 felt myself embarrassed by this proposal. In  
 truth, I was utterly unprepared; and wished  
 to excuse myself on the score of my dress,  
 thinking it improper to appear as the pastor  
 of these elegant, though ancient maidens, in  
 a rusty black coat, which time and snuff had  
 conspired to disfigure; but casting such a  
 downward glance on my own person, as  
 every man does, who means to ground an  
 apology on his habit, I was astonished to  
 find myself arrayed in a new cassock. My  
 amazement increased, on perceiving that my  
 right hand, which held a clean cambrick  
 handkerchief, was decorated with a magni-  
 ficent ring, not of diamond indeed, but  
 formed by a single sapphire of uncommon  
 magnitude and lustre. Without disturbing  
 my

my brain to account for my acquisition of this surprising ornament, I bowed again to the fair president, and followed her towards the chapel. My ring had acted, as a talisman to dispel my embarrassment, and I advanced with such an air of confidence, as I have formerly observed in a courtly preacher, apparently inspired, not indeed by the inward light of the soul, but by the radiance beaming from his own little finger.

We now entered the chapel: it was a structure of exquisite proportions, in which elegance and simplicity were most happily united. The walls were covered with a stucco of very pale dove-colour, enriched with decorations of white marble, consisting chiefly of emblematic figures, expressive of innocence and peace. The only painting which this edifice contained, was of glass; it formed the rich and magnificent window, to which the chapel was indebted for all the light it received. The effect of this window was truly celestial; not  
only

only from the happy disposition of that soft and solemn radiance which it diffused over the building, but from the transcendent beauty of the figures with which it was enriched. Chastity was here represented in a meek yet firm position, supported by Temperance and Fortitude, and paying a kind of modest homage to Charity and Faith. The two latter were raised on a slight elevation, and, being united by a posture of sisterly endearment, formed the pyramidical point in this enchanting group. The distinct character of every personage was so exquisitely conceived, and so forcibly expressed; the connection of all was rendered so happily visible by their attention to each other, that no spectator could behold this little assembly of virtues, without feeling a tender reverence for each, and without wishing to become the perfect votary of all.

While I gazed on this enchanting picture, the bell began to toll: the numerous sisterhood came flocking to their seats: I advanced to the reading desk: I adjusted the



books : I went through the service : and now, with a heart that began to palpitate afresh, I ascended the pulpit. A multitude of curious and piercing eyes flashed upon me : but my embarrassment was a little relieved by a hymn of the divinest melody, most admirably sung by a few sisters of the house. In the time which this soothing ceremony allowed me to collect my hurried spirits, it struck me, that the unknown power to whom I was indebted for my cassock and my ring, might have happily supplied me with a supernatural sermon. In this hope I now searched my pockets, but, to my utter disappointment, I could find only a small copy of the Old Testament. In confusion and distress, I turned hastily to such passages, as I thought might befriend me on the present occasion. My eye suddenly fastened on a text that pleased me : I closed the volume ; sat in profound thought for a few minutes ; then rose, with inward exultation, and delivered the following discourse.

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"In the 11th Chapter of Judges, and at the  
" 38th Verse, it is thus written—

*"She went with her Companions, and be-  
" wailed her Virginity."*

"ALAS! the tender-hearted might  
" say to themselves, on first hearing these  
" few and simple words, how frequent,  
" how universal is such lamentation!—In  
" every age, and in all the civilized nations  
" of the globe, many inconsiderate daugh-  
" ters of Eve have been hastily led into pe-  
" nitence and sorrow, by the violence or the  
" artifice of an imperious and a deceitful  
" passion: and often have they bewailed the  
" dishonourable loss of that maiden purity,  
" regarded as the best, and perhaps the  
" only treasure, which nature and fortune  
" had bestowed upon them.

"But it was not so with the fair  
" mourner in my text: she was the chaste  
" and honoured daughter of Jephtha, the  
" Judge of Israel; she bewailed not the  
" loss

“ loss of her virginity, but that she was  
“ destined to carry it to the grave. Being  
“ condemned to die, in compliance with  
“ the rash vow of her father, she lamented  
“ not the immediate stroke of death, but  
“ the idea of dying without having fulfilled  
“ her fair expectations of nuptial happiness  
“ and maternal delight.

“ Before I proceed to any remarks on  
“ this interesting story, let me here observe  
“ to you, my sisters, that the learned and  
“ pious men, who have endeavoured to  
“ elucidate the obscurer passages of the  
“ Old Testament, are by no means agreed  
“ on the real fate of this lovely victim.  
“ Some contend that she actually perished  
“ by a violent death; and others affirm,  
“ that she was only condemned to perpe-  
“ tual virginity. I will not enter upon the  
“ merits of this question, because, in what-  
“ ever light the history of this fair sufferer  
“ may be considered, it equally affords me  
“ a proper ground-work for the doctrine I  
“ wish to inculcate. Her sorrow, whatever  
“ its



“ its duration might be, naturally leads me  
 “ to point out to you a great and important  
 “ truth; a truth, my sisters, in which you  
 “ are principally concerned! and it is this—  
 “ that to pass through human life, either  
 “ by a short or a long journey, and finally  
 “ to quit it in the character of a virgin,  
 “ is by no means a just cause for lamenta-  
 “ tion.

“ Do not mistake me, I mean not to re-  
 “ flect, with a cruel asperity, on Jephtha’s  
 “ unhappy daughter! I mean not to insinu-  
 “ ate aught against the temper or the mo-  
 “ desty of the damsel; that would indeed  
 “ be barbarous, when her strange mis-  
 “ chance was so peculiarly severe, as to  
 “ plead for the tenderest sympathy and  
 “ compassion. *She came out to meet her*  
 “ *victorious father, with timbrels and with*  
 “ *dances; and she was his only child: be-*  
 “ *sides her he had neither son nor daughter.*  
 “ How bitter must be the condition of this  
 “ darling child, when she found her trium-  
 “ phant festivity turned to anguish, by the  
 “ vow

“vow of her precipitate parent! Every  
“humane heart must bleed at the idea; and  
“the more, when it remarks with what an  
“affectionate magnanimity she submitted  
“to her fate:—*And she said unto him, My*  
“*father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto*  
“*the Lord, do to me according to that which*  
“*hath proceeded out of thy mouth, forasmuch*  
“*as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of*  
“*thine enemies.*—Generous, heroic maiden!  
“she enjoyed the past triumph of her fa-  
“ther, in her own present calamity and de-  
“spair. Her first sentiments were those of  
“the affectionate, disinterested daughter: if  
“these were followed by a more selfish idea,  
“it was suggested by a national custom,  
“and arose not from any defects in the  
“spirit and character of the devoted vic-  
“tim. But let us hear how she proceeded!  
“*And she said unto her father, Let this*  
“*thing be done for me: let me alone two*  
“*months, that I may go up and down upon*  
“*the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I*  
“*and my fellows!*—Strange as her request  
“may

“ may sound in a modern ear, it appeared  
 “ reasonable to her father; *and he said,*  
 “ *Go!*—and well might he say so; for her  
 “ petition was not the dictate of a wan-  
 “ ton and dissolute spirit, preparing to la-  
 “ ment the loss of expected pleasure, with  
 “ coarseness of sentiment and indelicacy of  
 “ language: no! it proceeded only from  
 “ her wish to observe a religious ceremony,  
 “ which prevailed among the unmarried fe-  
 “ males of her country, who considered the  
 “ destiny of living and of dying in a single  
 “ state, as the severest evil that Heaven  
 “ could inflict. This idea was indeed uni-  
 “ versal among the Jews: but the Jews  
 “ were a moody and a murmuring people,  
 “ perpetually disposed to quarrel, not only  
 “ with the common incidents of life, but  
 “ with the most merciful dispensations of  
 “ their God. It is the perversity of their  
 “ general judgment on this head, and not  
 “ the particular conduct of one most ami-  
 “ able and unfortunate maiden, that I  
 “ mean to censure. To guard the whole  
 VOL. III. N “ sisterhood



“sisterhood against the insidious approaches  
“of discontent, I would here demonstrate,  
“that to bewail virginity, in the Jewish  
“sense of bewailing it, is equally irrational  
“and irreligious.

“A custom, however reprehensible,  
“which has prevailed among any civilized  
“people, deserves to be fairly considered,  
“and will generally be found to possess  
“some important advantage to plead in its  
“behalf. This was undoubtedly the case  
“in the custom I allude to: it wanted not  
“the plea of political wisdom: the female  
“ceremony of bewailing virginity had as-  
“suredly a strong tendency to promote  
“wedlock, and in this point of view it me-  
“rited the countenance of a wise legislator:  
“—but observe with what cruelty it must  
“have operated upon one unprotected class  
“of the community! How wretched must  
“have been the condition of an elderly  
“maiden among the Jews, if such a cha-  
“racter existed among them, when she was  
“taught, by the prejudices of the public,

“to

“to despise and to detest herself, as the ob-  
 “ject of human contempt, and divine dis-  
 “pleasure !

“It is an image of humiliation and dis-  
 “tress too grievous for a gentle heart to  
 “dwell upon. Let us hasten to contem-  
 “plate the very different condition of the  
 “same character among the early Chris-  
 “tians !—Here, indeed, we behold an ex-  
 “cess : but of a more chearful and ami-  
 “able complexion : not an excess of absurd  
 “barbarity, but of tender enthusiasm. In-  
 “stead of bewailing virginity as an evil,  
 “they exalted it into an evidence of super-  
 “natural merit : they regarded it as a clear  
 “title, not only to celestial bliss, but to the  
 “highest degree of beatitude that Heaven  
 “can bestow.

“I will not basely attempt to ingra-  
 “tiate myself with this audience, by  
 “adopting, from the fathers of the Catho-  
 “lic church, a flattering, illusive doctrine,  
 “to which the purity of our reformed  
 “religion can afford no countenance, for it

“ was not countenanced by that meek and  
“ righteous Master, whose life and lan-  
“ guage are the great, unerring lights that  
“ we profess to follow.

“ Though an advocate for a single life,  
“ St. Paul himself acknowledges, ‘ That  
“ concerning virgins, he had no com-  
“ mandment of the Lord :’—and indeed  
“ we find nothing in the words or actions  
“ of our blessed Saviour, that can be fairly  
“ construed into a recommendation of their  
“ single state. That he was very far from  
“ being a morose enemy to the joys, and  
“ even the festivity of marriage, one of his  
“ own miracles has sufficiently evinced : he  
“ seems not, however, to have shewn any  
“ prejudice or partiality towards any parti-  
“ cular order of human beings, but to have  
“ respected all the different conditions of  
“ that life, which, for the good of all, he  
“ condescended to assume. He respected  
“ the natural liberties of mankind : he in-  
“ terfered with no civil or social duties :  
“ he forbid no innocent pleasures : and,



“ what is more to our present purpose, he  
 “ recommended not an adherence to any  
 “ precise state of life, because his own di-  
 “ vine institutions are adapted to every  
 “ condition into which a human creature  
 “ can be thrown, by those busy shifters of  
 “ human scenery, time and chance.

“ But it may be said, ‘Although we readily  
 “ allow the benign influence of Chris-  
 “ tianity, upon all who sincerely profess it,  
 “ we are warranted by reason and expe-  
 “ rience in affirming, that certain modes of  
 “ life have a tendency to throw a gloom  
 “ over the mind, and to produce such a  
 “ dejection of spirit, as naturally leads to  
 “ lamentation; and is not the celibacy of  
 “ an ancient virgin an example of this  
 “ truth?’

“ We feel the full force of this question;  
 “ and imagination sets before us, what the  
 “ world exhibits daily to many a spectator,  
 “ a disconsolate maiden, the daughter of  
 “ an opulent father, yet accidentally de-  
 “ prived of all her fair prospects, all her

“tenderest connections, and destitute of  
“fortune in the decline of life.

“Shall we say to this solitary virgin,  
“‘Bewail not your condition; for, if you  
“are a good Christian, you should be  
“happy?’—No! we will not address her  
“thus; and shame on those ill-instructed  
“ministers of Christ, who insult the wretch-  
“ed with such abrupt and unfeeling admo-  
“nition! It is our duty to penetrate, with  
“insinuating tenderness, into the painful  
“recesses of a suffering spirit. Let us  
“gently search into the natural train of  
“thought, which depresses the unfortunate  
“virgin, and pursue that line of consola-  
“tion, which the present turn of her own  
“mind may effectually suggest!—By what  
“is she depressed? By the contrast, which  
“memory presents to her, between the gay  
“festivity of her early days, and the neglect  
“and solitude to which she is now re-  
“duced; by the comparison, which ima-  
“gination suggests to her, between her  
“own desolate condition, and the different  
“destiny

“ destiny of those female companions of  
 “ her youth, who were so fortunate as to  
 “ marry. Let us follow this clue, and it  
 “ may enable us to lead the dejected sufferer  
 “ from the labyrinth of perplexed and  
 “ gloomy thoughts into light and peace!  
 “ Let us first indulge and humour the me-  
 “ lancholy of her spirit! let us allow the  
 “ seeming severity of her lot! let us say  
 “ to her, ‘ You have, indeed, been unjustly  
 “ overlooked by men, who have pitched  
 “ upon companions less attractive, and  
 “ have shared their wealth and splendor  
 “ with partners far less deserving: but be-  
 “ fore you estimate their supposed felicity,  
 “ examine the real state of those associates  
 “ of your youth, whom marriage has placed  
 “ in a condition so different from your  
 “ own!—Let us try the first.—She is a  
 “ woman of rank, of opulence, of gaiety;  
 “ but her innocence was undermined by  
 “ the supposed constituents of her visionary  
 “ happiness; and your heart is too pure to



“ envy pleasures debased by infamy or  
“ loaded with remorse.

“ Let us proceed to a second.—Behold  
“ a woman, whom nature and education  
“ had rendered a lovely compound of vi-  
“ vacity and virtue! She was wedded to  
“ the man of her choice, with the sanction  
“ of her delighted parents. The figure,  
“ the reputation, and the fortune of her  
“ husband, made her the envy of all her  
“ fair single friends: but alas! could they  
“ have read her destiny, she would have  
“ excited only compassion; for she soon  
“ found, that the pleasing manners, the  
“ enchanting talents, and the bright fem-  
“ blance of integrity, in the man whom  
“ she fondly thought all perfection, covered  
“ a mind corrupted by licentious pleasure,  
“ and a heart that could only counterfeit,  
“ for a very short period, all the generous  
“ characteristics of genuine love. His pas-  
“ sion was extinguished by a few weeks  
“ possession; and she then experienced, in  
“ return

" return for real and anxious affection, mor-  
 " tifying neglect, contemptuous sarcasm,  
 " and perpetual infidelity. His vices soon  
 " produced their natural effect, the ruin of  
 " his fortune, his temper, and his health.  
 " Haunted by every painful recollection,  
 " he now vainly tries to drown, in deeper  
 " intemperance, all ideas of his misery;  
 " while the innocent and still lovely victim  
 " of his various crimes, surrounded by in-  
 " digent and deserted children, looks up  
 " to those, her former companions, who  
 " have remain unmarried, as the most  
 " enviable of human beings.

" But let us pass on to a third, and a  
 " much happier example of married life.—  
 " Here, indeed, as you truly observe, here  
 " we find every circumstance of character  
 " and condition, that is justly entitled to  
 " the name of fortunate. In this person  
 " we may behold the beloved wife of an  
 " affectionate and a sensible husband; the  
 " healthy and opulent mother of a nume-  
 " rous and lovely offspring. She has a  
 " heart

“ heart and spirit to relish happiness, and  
“ she is surrounded by every thing that is  
“ likely to give and to encrease it. Her  
“ condition is, in truth, opposite to that of  
“ the elderly, indigent, and solitary mai-  
“ den.—But let us take a nearer view of  
“ this fortunate personage ! let us visit the  
“ mansion of felicity !—Where is the gaiety  
“ that should surround it ?—Good Hea-  
“ vens ! what evil has befallen it ?—All  
“ is disorder and distress.—Misfortune  
“ has happened to one of the young and  
“ favourite branches of this flourishing  
“ house.—It is the cry of the distracted  
“ mother over her darling, torn from her  
“ by a calamitous death.—Let us retire ! for  
“ *her* we cannot comfort !—Her grief can be  
“ alleviated only by that Almighty Power,  
“ who has permitted it to be inflicted.  
“ But we have received our lesson in the  
“ piercing sound of her distress. A single  
“ shriek of the mother, on the expiration of  
“ her child, ought to drown for ever all the  
“ petty murmuring of maidenly discontent.

“ Let



" Let it not be said, that such calamities  
 " are rare ! Who has ever known a nu-  
 " merous family unvisited by sickness and  
 " sorrow ? O ! ye considerate virgins ! let  
 " me lead you to form a true estimate of  
 " all the good and evil in female life !  
 " Place, if you please, to the account of  
 " the wife and mother, all the more intense  
 " and more lively pleasures ! but enter  
 " fairly, at the same time, her anxieties,  
 " her terrors, her agonies, both of body  
 " and of mind ! enter also, on your own  
 " side of the account, your exemption  
 " from all these ! forget not the more cer-  
 " tain and quiet enjoyments, which parti-  
 " cularly belong to your own condition !  
 " Examine the two accounts with strict  
 " impartiality, and perhaps you will find,  
 " that, in a course of years, the balance has  
 " run considerably in your favour.

" But it should not be the sole business  
 " of a mortal to regard the enjoyments of  
 " human life ; a concern more important  
 " demands the attention of us all ; I mean,

“ the preparation for death. It is hardly  
“ possible, that the virgin can be properly  
“ prepared for this inevitable hour, who has  
“ reached the latter end of a long life in the  
“ habit of murmuring at her own lot, and  
“ thereby condemning the dispensations of  
“ that God, in whose presence she is so  
“ soon to appear. But, on the other hand  
“ the ancient maiden, who has supported  
“ the neglect and injustice of mankind  
“ with pious resignation and content, has  
“ such advantages over the married woman,  
“ in the awful and important close of hu-  
“ man existence, as more than repays her  
“ for any supposed or real inferiority in the  
“ point of worldly enjoyments. Let us  
“ pursue this idea! it leads us to interest-  
“ ing contemplation. Circumstances that  
“ attend the dying, of every station, are par-  
“ ticularly deserving of our notice; be-  
“ cause, however different the degrees and  
“ fashions of our lives, in the act of death  
“ we must all resemble each other. It is  
“ a trial universally endured, though va-  
“ riously

"riously sustained. Let me then conduct  
 "you, my sisters, to two scenes of this  
 "kind, different from each other, yet both  
 "affecting and instructive!—Let us first  
 "approach, and consider the death-bed of  
 "the Wife!—Behold a woman of virtue  
 "and of piety! behold her, after many blessings  
 "thankfully received, and many duties  
 "faithfully discharged, behold her devoutly  
 "hastening to her heavenly reward!  
 "—See! though her frame is shattered, her  
 "mind is still sedate!—yet see with what  
 "tender anguish she takes leave of an afflicted  
 "husband, who has been her fond  
 "and faithful guide in the paths of innocence  
 "and religion!—observe how her fortitude is  
 "shaken, by reading in his features a vehemence  
 "of distress bursting through the kind mask  
 "of resignation, which, in pity to her sufferings,  
 "he vainly labours to wear!

"Yet even this is not her severest trial:  
 "as her life is hastening to its close, she  
 "yields to a parental and irresistible de-  
 "fire;



“ fire; she calls for her children, to fold  
“ them for the last time to her bosom.—  
“ Good Heavens! what a scene!—O God!  
“ release her, for she has lost the firmness of  
“ piety itself!—her soul, engrossed by the  
“ wants and sorrows of these little inno-  
“ cents, and by a dreadful idea of what  
“ they may suffer, should their father also  
“ be taken from them—her distracted soul  
“ pays no longer its just obedience to the  
“ summons of her Maker!—Yet thou art  
“ not offended, Almighty Parent! for there  
“ are weaknesses peculiarly entitled to thy  
“ mercy; and such are the fond excesses of  
“ a maternal heart, to which thou hast al-  
“ lotted the extremes of delight and agony.

“ Let us turn from this heart-rending  
“ scene, to one, though equally awful, yet  
“ much less afflicting! Let us approach  
“ the death-bed of the Ancient Maiden!—  
“ Behold a woman, not endued with a  
“ more cultivated understanding, or with  
“ more habitual piety, than the dying mo-  
“ ther whom we have just beheld! but

“ O!

" O ! with what a different frame of mind  
 " and heart does the present expiring mor-  
 " tal support the most striking, if not  
 " the most important, of human trials !  
 " Observe with what serenity she contem-  
 " plates the visible approach of that de-  
 " stroying power, who has been called the  
 " King of Terrors !—She has led a life of  
 " innocence and content ; but her soul is  
 " not rivetted to earth by those earthly  
 " fetters, which, in the preceding instance,  
 " the twin seraphs, Hope and Faith, were  
 " hardly able to unlock. Here religion  
 " operates without a check. This elderly,  
 " expiring virgin has, indeed, her tender  
 " attachments to relinquish ; but she bids  
 " adieu to her friends with the placid air of  
 " one who is setting forth on a long-  
 " wished-for journey. She does not hurry  
 " from the world with the over-heated  
 " enthusiasm of Romish nuns, who call  
 " themselves, with an unbecoming famili-  
 " arity and fervour of language, the spouses  
 " of their God.—No ! she contemplates  
 " the

“ the gracious promises of her Redeemer  
“ with the humble confidence of a faithful  
“ and affectionate servant. She prepares  
“ to meet him with the meek obedience of  
“ tender humanity and unpervverted reason,  
“ willing to quit a world, where she has  
“ been frequently wronged and neglected,  
“ to enter those blessed regions where  
“ neglect or injustice can never be ad-  
“ mitted.

“ O ! my sisters, what is the lesson that  
“ these contrasted scenes may suggest to  
“ us ? Is it not this ? that every good and  
“ wise virgin of advanced life, instead of  
“ sinking into the Jewish folly of bewail-  
“ ing her virginity, should regard it as a  
“ passport from Providence, which may  
“ have conducted her through a vexatious  
“ world, exempt from many of its severest  
“ troubles ; and which may at last enable  
“ her to pass the gates of death, not with  
“ reluctant anguish, but with rational com-  
“ posure and devout exultation.—To crown  
“ all our disquietudes and conflicts by an  
“ end



“ end so happy, is a destiny that the purest  
 “ and happiest of human characters might  
 “ esteem, perhaps, the most desirable of  
 “ blessings ; and to this, my beloved sisters,  
 “ may the God of purity conduct us all !—  
 “ Amen.”

In descending from the pulpit I observed, with an honest pride, the effect of my discourse in the features of the sisterhood. Several of them pressed around me to utter their compliments on the occasion ; while others contrived to compliment their preacher in a manner still more engaging, by discovering to me, without affectation, the traces of those subsiding tears, which I had drawn from my tender audience, not by the real excellence of my sermon, but by the cordial fervour and apparent sincerity of my zeal. In truth, I had preached to them from the bottom of a feeling and benevolent heart ; and I had raised so forcibly before my own eyes the successive images which I presented to them, that, in deliver-

ing my sermon, I was myself affected even to tears, and obliged to pause, more than once, to recover the powers of my suspended voice.—The lady Seraphina, who spoke to me, as president, in the name of the community, had begun to honour me with a very delicate encomium, but checked herself on a sudden; and, observing that I had exhausted myself to such a degree that I was ready to faint, she hastily dispatched the good Melesinda for a glass of hartshorn and water. I was still within the chapel; for, perceiving myself in some danger of falling, I had supported my weak and emaciated body against a pillar. The compassionate lady abbess held one of my hands, which answered the honest pressure of her generous anxiety. Her favourite Fuscina continued, by her direction, to chafe my temples till the hartshorn arrived. I drank it with some difficulty, and, regaining a little portion of strength, I said to my charitable assistants, in a feeble and broken voice, “Be not alarmed, my good sisters! you  
“ see

“ see before you a frail and feverish mortal, whose trembling nerves have but too often refused to second and support the honest ardour of his soul. Accept, however, my good intention, and allow me to live and die in your service !” The attentive lady abbess endeavoured to raise and comfort me with the most friendly and endearing expressions. She now conducted me, in the tenderest manner, into her own private apartment. She seated me on a most comfortable sofa, that filled a large recess in an elegant and spacious parlour. The room was decorated with many beautiful works, both of the needle and the pencil; but alas ! I was unable to contemplate their respective beauties, for the shades of death appeared now to be gathering very fast around me. The kind solicitude of Seraphina redoubled : she discovered the most fervent desire to restore my health. “ Excellent lady !” I exclaimed, with all the little voice that I could raise, “ disquiet not thy tender bosom with a vain expectation !—I



“ perceive that my last moment is near,  
“ and I ought not to regret it, since I have  
“ obtained and enjoyed the great object of  
“ my ambition, the affectionate favour of  
“ your sisterhood. Yet there is one thing  
“ that I have still to wish, and you alone  
“ can indulge me.”—“ O name it ! name  
“ it !” said the tender abbess, pressing my  
cold hand, and wetting it with her tears.  
“ Yes, madam,” I replied, “ I will lay  
“ before you all the little weaknesses of a  
“ heart that has much to hope, and little to  
“ fear from a being so benevolent and  
“ gentle as you are. I am a vain creature ;  
“ but your tenderness will call my vanity a  
“ virtue. Indeed I covet not the most  
“ envied distinction ; I sigh not for pre-  
“ eminence in learning, genius, or wit :  
“ yet, I confess to you, I wish with great  
“ fervour to attract the notice of posterity ;  
“ I wish, that as long as my name endures,  
“ it may be honoured with the affectionate  
“ remembrance of my fellow-creatures,  
“ and particularly with the tender esteem  
“ of

“of your sisterhood.” — “It must, it must,” said the good abbess, fobbing.—  
 “O!” replied I, enfolding one of her hands within mine, “secure to me this delightful distinction! you have the power of doing so:—give me your promise, that I shall be buried in your chapel, under a simple slab of white marble, with this inscription;

“ Here lies

“ — — — — —

“ The Friend and Pastor

“ of Old Maids.”

The kind abbess assented, and I thus continued:—“I have yet another request: pray forgive the whimsies of a fond, and, perhaps, foolish old man!—I conjure you, let me not be removed from this chamber, till the day of my interment!—place me in my coffin just as I am, in this my pastoral habit! and, as I confess

O 3

“ I have

“ I have a secret horror of being buried  
“ alive, pray let some of your good sisters  
“ be so charitable as to watch my body,  
“ during nine days at least, after my de-  
“ cease !”

The tender Seraphina continued to signify her perfect acquiescence in all my desires ; not by distinct words, indeed, but a series of the most expressive and endearing gestures. — “ Enough ! enough !” I exclaimed, in a sepulchral tone ; and, bestowing upon her a benediction but half articulated, I with difficulty raised her unresisting hand to my clammy lips, then gently laid it on my own throbbing heart, and, having squeezed it against my bosom in a strong convulsive pressure, expired.

My spirit, however, remained fluttering and invisible in the chamber, and seemed to contemplate, with a sort of seraphic pride, the chaste, weeping abbess, and my own lifeless body. The excellent Seraphina would not quit the corpse for a single moment, till she was thoroughly persuaded that



that the breath of the lamented pastor was departed from him for ever. She then gave such orders as were necessary for the literal accomplishment of my request. She permitted select parties of the kind and curious sisterhood to enter the apartment by turns, and indulge themselves in contemplating the countenance of their departed friend. My spirit was highly flattered and entertained by their various comments upon it, and by their many quick vicissitudes of maidenly curiosity and regret. At length a simple but elegant coffin was brought to the sofa on which I died. The body, without any change of dress, was deposited within it; but the coffin remained open. The admirable lady abbess herself determined to set the community an example of tender and generous attachment. She did me the unusual honour of watching the body the first night, attended by her two favourite sisters. In the evening of the subsequent day, it happened that Melesinda and Fuscina were left alone in this office. They

endeavoured to amuse each other by entering into a very curious and diverting debate on my character and constitution: but my modesty will not allow me to repeat the many flattering things which were uttered on this occasion. At last, when they had thoroughly discussed all my qualities—"I sincerely regret this good man," said the friendly Fuscina, "as the world contains but few such advocates for our sisterhood: but don't you think, my dear Melesinda, that we may ground some little hope of his revival, on his singular request of being attended nine days?—Suppose he should be only in a trance!—Good God!" continued the kind-hearted creature, "I would give the world to restore him."

As she uttered these words, she cast a piercing eye on my countenance, and, wetting the tip of her fingers with a little bottle of lavender-water, which she held in her left hand, she began to rub my temples with an eager anxiety, yet with some degree of  
that

that awe and trepidation which the dead are apt to inspire.

In a few moments she exclaimed, "Look! look! my dear Melefinda! am I mistaken? or may we not perceive a little dawn of colour on his cheek?" — Her benevolent heart beat high with expectation; and, seizing my hand, she said aloud, with the commanding, ecstatic air of a beneficent enchantress — "O thou gentle pastor, revive, and live for ever! not only for us, but for every future Old Maid!" — She seemed to speak with a prophetic transport; and at the same time squeezed my hand with such forcible pressure, that I awaked with mingled sensations of pain and exultation.

I looked wistfully around, and was surprised to find, instead of a kind and honest old maiden on each side of me, St. Basil's Discourse on Virginity at my left hand, and towards the right, an exhausted bottle of port.

In



In the first moments that I could clearly recollect all the particulars of my vision, I threw them upon paper, and resolved to make them serve me as the close of my elaborate Essay, in the hope, that good Old Maidens, who are said to delight in visions, may believe, like the honest folks in Homer, that they descend from heaven.

Whether I am really indebted to my good angel, or not, for this unexpected conclusion of my work, I shall now leave the candid critics of either sex to decide.— Frank and gentle spirits, who are willing to be pleased ! let me request and advise you to consider this chequered production with that uniform good-nature and satisfaction, which the author has endeavoured to promote, and sincerely wishes you to preserve, not only through these pages, but in turning over every new leaf of your separate lives, whatever you may chance to find its contents !—Let me caution you against one possible error in your judgment of this performance ! Do not, I entreat you, suppose

that these little volumes were written with an idle ambition of trying what supposed wit and learning could produce on a subject not very promising!—Do not, I conjure you, rank my Essay on Old Maids with the famous Meditation on a Broomstick!—I flatter myself it is far superior to that celebrated production in the merits of the aim proposed, though not in those of execution. I am willing to hope that my design will be thought to possess the charm of originality; but I cannot presume to think, that I am entitled to any such commendation for the conduct of my performance, since I must candidly confess, that it bears a very striking resemblance to many other philosophical essays, by ending in a Dream.

END OF THE ESSAY.

APPEN-

7 JY 65







**HROSWITHA or ROSVIDA**  
*the dramatic Nun of Saxony, who  
flourished in the tenth Century.*

*Pub.<sup>d</sup> according to Act of Parliament Jan.<sup>y</sup> 1. 1793. by T. Cadell in the Strand.*

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## APPENDIX.

AFTER a fruitless research of some years, accident and the kindness of a friend have put into my hands the rare edition of Hroswitha, or as she is sometimes more harmoniously called Rosvida, published in 1501 by her celebrated brother of Parnassus, Conradus Celtes; who had not only the honour of being himself poet laureat to the emperor of Germany, but received from his imperial master Maximilian I. a diploma investing him with the privilege of bestowing the laurel on others. It is remarkable that this diploma bears the date of the very year in which Celtes published the works of our dramatic Nun: these he addressed to his patron Frederic *the wise*, Elector of Saxony, with a preliminary epistle, in which he relates his own peregrinations thro' Germany, in search of curious manuscripts. He in-  
forms



Rosvida, congratulate themselves on the happy progress of refinement, in comparing these sacred dramas of the fair Saxon with those of a poetical maiden of our time; who without wearing the robe of monastic sanctity, has given to religious composition a chaste elegance and spirit, which it was impossible for her early predecessor to attain: yet surely the curious comedies of Rosvida will not be viewed with contempt by any liberal reader, who has the justice to reflect, that had this fair dramatist of a German cloister been fortunately born in our age and country, she would have proved a second Hannah More.

The edition of Rosvida, by Celtes\*, which is extremely scarce, contains her six comedies in prose, eight religious histories

\* There is a more modern edition of this religious dramatist, by Leonhardus Schurzfleischius; Witebergæ, 1707: but this appears to be equally scarce, as I have not been able to find any copy of it in the course of many years inquiry.

in verse, and a poetical panegyric on the emperor Odo the first.

From her comedies I have selected two the most remarkable. She seems to have thought this species of composition required some apology from a Nun, which she makes with uncommon modesty and devotion, in the following preface.

The PREFACE of ROSVIDA to her  
Six Comedies.

“**M**ANY religious persons are found, nor can we perfectly clear ourselves from the following charge, who prefer the eloquence of polite literature, and the vain charms of heathen books, to the utility of the sacred Scriptures. There are also others attached to holy books, who although they despise other heathen compositions, yet frequently peruse the fictions of Terence: and while they are delighted with the sweetness of his language,

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guage, are contaminated by an acquaintance with his licentious subjects. Wherefore I, the spirited voice of Ganderlheim, have not refused to imitate in writing the author, whom others honour by reading; that even in the very species of composition, which used to recite the disgraceful indecencies of wanton festivity, the laudable purity of sacred virgins might be celebrated according to the ability of my inconsiderable genius. Yet this makes me often ashamed and covered with a deep blush, that impelled by the nature of this composition, I have revolved in my mind, and expressed with my pen, the detestable madness of licentious lovers, and their wickedly sweet conversation, which can hardly be accommodated to our ears. But if, from an excess of delicacy, I had neglected these things, I should neither have compleated my purpose, nor have exhibited so fully the praise of the innocent, according to my power. For in proportion as the blandishments of mad lovers are more ready to seduce, the honour  
of



of the Supreme Protector is more sublime, and the victory of the triumphant is proved more glorious: especially when feminine weakness is crowned with conquest, and manly strength is overwhelmed with confusion. I doubt not it will be objected by some, that the poverty of this composition is much inferior, much more contracted, and utterly unlike the author, whom I proposed to imitate. I agree to their opinion, yet declare to these persons, that on this account I cannot justly be censured, as if I wished to be fraudulently likened to those, who have gone far beyond my indolence in sublimer science; for I have not such arrogance as to presume to compare myself even with the last disciples of eminent writers; but this is my sole aim, that although I have by no means any suitable powers, yet with a suppliant devotion of mind I would employ the talent I have received upon the Giver. For I have not so much self-love, that, to avoid reprehension, I would cease to proclaim the virtue of Christ, whose

power is visible in the holy, as far as he himself will enable me. If my devotion pleases any one, I shall rejoice; but if it pleases no one, either through my weakness, or the rusticity of my defective language, yet what I have performed is still satisfactory to myself: because, while in this dramatic composition I seriously attend to the unworthiness of my own labour, (which in some other works of my inexperience has been devoted to heroic verse) I abstemiously avoid the pernicious delights of the heathen."

EPISTOLA

## EPISTOLA IN COMEDIAS.

**H**ROSVITHÆ, illustris mulieris  
Germanæ gente Saxonica ortæ in sex  
comedias suas prefatio incipit feliciter.

Plures inveniuntur catholici, cujus nos  
penitus expurgare nequivimus facti, qui pro  
cultioris facundia sermonis gentilium vani-  
tatem librorum utilitati preferunt sacrarum  
scripturarum: Sunt etiam alii, sacris inhe-  
rentes paginis, qui licet alia gentilium  
spernant, Therencii tamen figmenta fre-  
quentius lectitant, et dum dulcedine sermo-  
nis delectantur, nefandarum noticia rerum  
maculantur: Unde ego, clamor validus  
Gandishemenfis, non recusavi illum imitari  
dictando, quem alii colunt legendo; quo  
eodem dictationis genere, quo turpia lasci-  
varum incesta feriarum recitabantur, lauda-  
bilis sacrarum castimonia virginum juxta  
mei facultatem ingenioli celebraretur. Hoc

P 3

tamen



tamen facit non raro verecundari, gravique rubore perfundi, quod, hujusmodi specie dictationis cogente, detestabilem illicite amantium dementiam, et male dulcia colloquia eorum, quæ nec nostro auditui promittuntur accommodari, dictando mente tractavi, et stili officio designavi: sed si hæc erubescendo negligerem, nec proposito satisfacerem, nec innocentium laudem adeo plene juxta meum posse exponerem; quia quanto blanditiæ amantium ad illiciendum promptiores, tanto et superni adjutoris gloria sublimior; et triumphantium victoria probatur gloriosior: præsertim cum scæminea fragilitas vinceret, et virilis robur confusioni subjaceret. Non enim dubito mihi ab aliquibus objeci, quod hujus vilitas dictationis multo inferior, multo contractior, penitusque dissimilis ejus, quem proponebam imitari: eorum concedo sententiis: ipsis tamen denuntio, me in hoc jure reprehendi non posse, quasi his vellem abusive assimilari, qui meam inertiam longe processerunt in scientia sublimiori. Nec enim  
tantæ

tantæ sum jactantiæ, ut vel extremis me presumam conferre auctorum alumnis; sed hoc solum nitor, ut licet nullatenus valeam apte, supplici tamen mentis devotione acceptum in datorem retorqueam ingenium. Ideoque non sum adeo amatrix mei, ut pro vitandâ reprehensione Christi, qui in sanctis operatur, virtutem, quocunque ipse dabit posse, cessem predicare. Si enim alicui placet mea devotio, gaudebo; si autem, vel pro mei abjectione, vel pro vitiosi sermonis rusticitate, nulli placet; memetipsam tamen juvat quod feci; quia dum proprii vilitatem laboris (in aliis meæ inscientiæ opusculis heroico ligatam strophio) in hac dramatica junctura ferie colo perniciosas gentilium delicias abstinendo devito.

## DULCICIUS.

## ARGUMENTUM in DULCICIUM.

Passio sanctarum virginum Agapis, Chioniae, et Hyrenae; quas sub nocturno silentio Dulcicius praeses clam adiit, cupiens earum amplexibus saturari: sed mox ut intravit, mente captus, ollas et sartagine pro virginibus amplectendo osculabatur, donec facies et vestis horribili nigredine inficiebantur. Deinde Sicinnio comiti jussu per puniendas virgines cessit qui etiam miris modis illusum tandem Agapem et Chioniam concremari, et Hyrenam jussit perfodi.

## INTERLOCUTORES.

DIOCLESIANUS.

AGAPES.

CHIONIA.

HYRENA.

DULCICIUS.

SISINNIUS.

MILITES.

SCENA



## SCENA PRIMA.

*Dioclesianus, Agapes, Chionia, Hyrena.*

*Diocles.* PARENTELÆ claritas, ingenuitas, vestrumque serenitas pulchritudinis, exegit vos nuptiali lege primis in palatio copulari: quod nostri jussu annuerit fieri, si Christum negare, nostrisque diis sacrificia velitis ferre.

*Agap.* Esto securus curarum, nec te gravet nostrarum preparatio nuptiarum, quia nec ad negationem confitendi nominis, nec ad corruptionem integritatis ullis rebus compelli poterimus.

*Diocles.* Quid sibi vult ista, quæ vos agitat fatuitas?

*Agap.* Quod signum fatuitatis nobis inesse deprehendis?

*Diocles.* Evidens, magnumque.

*Agap.* In quo?

*Diocles.* In hoc precipue; quod relicta vetustæ observantia religionis, inutilem Christianæ

Christianæ novitatem sequimini superstitionis.

*Agap.* Temere calumniaris statum Dei omnipotentis—periculum!

*Diocles.* Cujus?

*Agap.* Tui rei que publicæ quam gubernas.

*Diocles.* Ista insanit; amoveatur!

*Chion.* Mea germana non insanit, sed tui stultitiam juste reprehendit.

*Diocles.* Ista inclementius bacchatur: unde nostris conspectibus æque subtrahatur! et tertia discutiatur!

*Hyren.* Tertiam rebellem, tibi que penitus comprobabis renitentem.

*Diocles.* Hyrena cum sis minor ætate, sito major dignitate.

*Hyren.* Ostende, quæso, quo pacto!

*Diocles.* Flecte cervicem diis, et esto fororibus exemplum correctionis, et causa liberationis.

*Hyren.* Conquiniscant idolis, qui velint incurrere iram celsi tonantis; ego quidem caput regali unguento delibutum, non de-

honestabo pedibus simulacrorum submit-  
tendo.

*Diocles.* Cultura deorum non adducit de-  
honestatem, sed præcipuum honorem.

*Hyren.* Et quæ inhonestas turpior, quæ  
turpitudine major, quam servos venerari ut  
dominos?

*Diocles.* Non suadeo tibi venerari servos,  
sed dominum, principumque deos.

*Hyren.* Nonne is est cujusvis servus, qui  
ab artifice pretio comparatur, ut empti-  
tius?

*Diocles.* Hujus presumptio verbositatis  
tollenda est suppliciis.

*Hyren.* Hoc optamus, hoc amplectimur,  
ut per Christi amorem suppliciis laceremur.

*Diocles.* Istæ contumaces, nostrisque de-  
cretis contraluctantes catenis irrecientur;  
et ad examen Dulcicii presulis sub carcerali  
squalore serventur!

SCENA



## SCENA SECUNDA.

*Dulcicius, Milites.*

*Dulcic.* Producite, Milites, producite  
quas tenetis in carcere!

*Mili.* Ecce quas vocasti!

*Dul.* Papæ! quam pulcræ, quam venustæ, quam egregiæ puellulæ!

*Mili.* Profecto decoræ.

*Dul.* Captus sum illarum specie.

*Mili.* Credibile.

*Dul.* Exestuo illas ad mei amorem trahere.

*Mili.* Diffidimus te prevalere.

*Dul.* Quare?

*Mili.* Quia stabiles fide.

*Dul.* Quid si suadeam blandimentis?

*Mili.* Contemnunt.

*Dul.* Quid si terream suppliciis?

*Mili.* Parvi pendunt.

*Dul.* Et quid fiet?

*Mili.* Precogita.

*Dul.*

*Dul.* Ponite illas in custodia in interior-  
rem officinæ ædem ; in cujus proaulio mi-  
nistrorum servantur vasa.

*Mili.* Ad quid eo loci ?

*Dul.* Quo a me sepiuscule possint videri.

*Mili.* Ut jubes.

## S C E N A T E R T I A.

*Dulcicius, Milites.*

*Dul.* Quid agunt captivæ sub hoc noctis  
tempore ?

*Mili.* Vacant hymnis.

*Dul.* Accedamus propius !

*Mili.* Tinnulæ sonitum vocis a longe  
audimus.

*Dul.* Observate pro foribus cum lucernis :  
ego autem intrabo, et vel optatis amplexi-  
bus me faturabo.

*Mili.* Intra !—prestolabimur.

S C E N A

## SCENA QUATUOR.

*Agapes, Chionia, Hyrena.*

*Agap.* Quid strepit præ foribus?

*Hyr.* Infelix Dulcicius ingreditur.

*Chion.* Deus nos tueatur!

*Agap.* Amen.

*Chion.* Quid sibi vult collisio ollarum, caccaborum et fartaginum?

*Hyr.* Lustrabo. Accedite quæso per rimulas prospicite.

*Agap.* Quid est?

*Hyr.* Ecce iste stultus, mente alienatus, estimat se uti nostris amplexibus.

*Agap.* Quid facit?

*Hyr.* Nunc ollas molli foyet gremio, nunc fartagines et caccabos amplectitur, mitia libans oscula!

*Chion.* Ridiculum!

*Hyr.* Nam facies, manus, ac vestimenta, adeo fordida, adeo coinquinata, ut nigredo  
quæ



quæ inhesit similitudinem Ethiopis exprimat.

*Agap.* Decet ut talis appareat corpore, qualis a diabolo possidetur in mente.

*Hyr.* En parat egredi ! intendamus quid illo egrediente agant milites pro foribus expectantes,

## SCENA QUINTA.

*Milites, Dulcicius.*

*Mili.* Quis hic egreditur demoniacus, vel magis ipse diabolus ? — fugiamus !

*Dul.* Milites, quo fugitis ? stete, expectate, ducite me cum lucernis ad cubile.

*Mili.* Vox senioris nostri, sed imago diaboli ! Non subsistamus, sed fugam maturemus ; fantasma vult nos pessundare.

*Dul.* Ad palatium ibo ; et quam abjectionem patior principibus vulgabo.

SCENA

## SCENA SEXTA.

*Dulcicius, Hostiarii.*

*Dul.* Hostiarii, introducite me in palatium, quia ad imperatorem habeo secretum.

*Hostiar.* Quid hoc vile ac detestabile monstrum, scissisque nigellis paniculis obstitum! pugnis tundamus; de gradu precipitemus; nec ultra huc detur liber accessus.

*Dul.* Væ! Væ! quid contigit? nonne splendidissimis vestibus indutus, totoque corpore videor nitidus? et quicumque me aspicit velut horribile monstrum fastidit. Ad conjugem revertar, quo ab illa quid erga me actum sit experiar.—En solutis crinibus egreditur, omnisque domus lacrimis persequitur.

*Conjux.* Hey! heu mi senior Dulciti! quid pateris? non es sanæ mentis. Factus es in derisum Christicolis.

*Dul.*

*Dul.* Nunc tandem sentio me illusum  
illarum maleficiis.

*Conjux.* Hoc me vehementer confudit,  
hoc præcipue contristavit, quod quid patie-  
baris ignorasti.

*Dul.* Mando ut lascivæ præsententur pu-  
ellæ, et abstractis vestibus publice denuden-  
tur: quo versa vice, quod nostra possint  
ludibria, experiantur.

## SCENA SEPTIMA.

*Milites.*

*Mil.* Frustra sudamus, invanum labora-  
vimus. Ecce vestimenta virgineis corpori-  
bus inherent, velut coria. Sed et ipse, qui  
nos ad expoliandum urgebat, præses, stertit  
sedendo; nec ullatenus excitari potest a  
somno. Ad imperatorem adeamus, ipsique  
rerum quæ geruntur propalemus.



## SCENA OCTAVA.

*Dioclesianus.*

*Diocles.* Doleo nimium, quod presidem Dulcicium audio adeo illulum, adeo exprobatum, adeo calumniatum. Sed ne viles mulierculæ jactent se impune nostris diis, Deorumque cultoribus illudere; Sifinnium comitem dirigam ad ultionem exercendam.

## SCENA NONA.

*Sifinnius, Milites, Agapes, Chionia.*

*Sifinn.* O Milites! ubi sunt lascivæ, quæ torqueri debent puellæ?

*Mili.* Affliguntur in carcere.

*Sifinn.* Hyrenam reservate, et reliquas producite!

*Mili.* Cur unam excipis?

*Sifinn.* Parcens infantiae: forte facilius convertetur, si sororum presentia non terribitur.

*Mili.* Ita: praesto sunt quas jussisti.

§

*Sifinn.*

*Sifinn.* Prebete assensum, Agapes, et Chionia, meis consiliis !

*Agap.* Si prebebimus ?

*Sifinn.* Ferte libamina diis !

*Hyr.* Vero et æterno Patri, ejusque coeterno Filio, sanctoque amborum Paraceto, sacrificium laudis sine intermissione libamus.

*Sifinn.* Hoc vobis non suadeo, sed pœnis prohibeo.

*Agap.* Non prohibebis, nec unquam sacrificabimus demoniis.

*Sifinn.* Deponite duritiam cordis, et sacrificate ; sin autem, faciam vos interfectum iri juxta præceptum imperatoris Dioclesiani.

*Chion.* Decet ut in nostri necem obtemperes jussis tui imperatoris, cujus nos decreta contemnere noscis. Si autem pariendo moram feceris, æquum est ut tu interficiaris.

*Sifinn.* Non tardetis, Milites, non tardetis, capere blasphemias has, et in ignem projicite vivas.

Q<sup>2</sup>

*Mil.*

*Mili.* Instemus construendis rogis; et tradamus illas bachantibus flammis, quo finem demus conviciis.

*Agap.* Non tibi, Domine, non tibi hæc potentia insolita; ut ignis vim virtutis suæ obliviscatur, tibi obtemperando. Sed tædet nos morarum: ideo rogamus solvi retinacula animarum; quo extinctis corporibus tecum plaudent in æthere nostri spiritus.

#### SCENA DECIMA.

*Milites, Sifinnius, Hyrena.*

*Mili.* O novum, O stupendum miraculum! Ecce animæ egressæ sunt corpora, et nulla læsionis reperiuntur vestigia. Sed nec capilli nec vestimenta ab igne sunt ambusta, quo minus corpora.

*Sifinn.* Proferte Hyrenam.

*Mili.* Etiam.

*Sifinn.* Pertimesce, Hyrena, necem forum; et cave perire exemplo earum.

*Hyr.* Opto exemplum earum moriendo  
sequi,



sequi, quo merear cum his æternaliter lætari.

*Sifinn.* Cede, cede meæ suasioni.

*Hyr.* Haud cedam facinus suadenti.

*Sifinn.* Si non cesseris, non citum tibi præstabo exitum; sed differam, et nova indies supplicia multiplicabo.

*Hyr.* Quanto acrius torqueor, tanto gloriøs exaltabor.

*Sifinn.* Supplicia non metuis! admovebo quod horresces.

*Hyr.* Quicquid irrogabis adversi, evadam juvamine Christi.

*Sifinn.* Faciam te ad lupanar duci, corpusque tuum turpiter coinquinari.

*Hyr.* Melius est ut corpus quibuscunque injuriis maculetur, quam anima idolis polluat.

*Sifinn.* Si focia eris meretricum, non poteris polluta ultra intra contubernium computari virginum.

*Hyr.* Voluptas parit pœnam, necessitas autem coronam: nec dicitur reatus nisi quod consentit animus.

*Sisinn.* Frustra parcebam, frustra miserebar hujus infantiae.

*Mili.* Prescivimus: nullatenus ad deorum culturam potest flecti, nec terrore unquam potest frangi.

*Sisinn.* Non ultra parcam.

*Mili.* Rectum.

*Sisinn.* Capite illam sine miseratione; et trahentes cum crudelitate ducite ad lupanar sine honore.

*Hyr.* Non perducent.

*Sisinn.* Quis prohibere potest?

*Hyr.* Qui mundum sua providentia regit.

*Sisinn.* Probabo.

*Hyr.* Ac citius libito.

*Sisinn.* Ne terreamini milites fallacibus hujus blasphemæ presagiis.

*Mili.* Non tremur, sed tuis preceptis parere nitimur.

## SCENA UNDECIMA.

*Sisinnius, Milites.*

*Sisinn.* Qui sunt hi qui nos invadunt?  
quam similes sunt militibus quibus Hyre-  
nam

nam tradidimus. Ipsi sunt! — Cur tam cito revertimini? quo tenditis tam anhel?

*Mili.* Teipsum quærimus.

*Sifinn.* Ubi est quam traxistis?

*Mili.* In supercilio montis.

*Sifinn.* Cujus?

*Mili.* Proximi.

*Sifinn.* O insensati et hebetes! totiusque rationis incapaces!

*Mili.* Cur caufaris? cur voce et vultu nobis minaris?

*Sifinn.* Dii vos perdant!

*Mili.* Quid in te commisimus? quam tibi injuriam fecimus? quæ tua jussa transgressi sumus?

*Sifinn.* Nonne precepi, ut rebellem deorum ad turpitudinis locum traheretis?

*Mili.* Precepisti; nosque tuis preceptis operam dedimus implendis: sed supervenere duo ignoti juvenes asserentes se ad hoc ex te missos, ut Hyrenam ad cacumen montis perducerent.

*Sifinn.* Ignorabam.

*Mili.* Agnoscimus.



*Sifinn.* Quales fuerunt?

*Mili.* Amictu splendidi, vultu admodum reverendi.

*Sifinn.* Num sequabimini illos,

*Mili.* Sequebamur.

*Sifinn.* Quid fecerunt?

*Mili.* A dextra levaque Hyrenæ se locaverunt, et nos huc direxerunt, quo te exitus rei non lateret.

*Sifinn.* Restat ut ascenso equo pergam, et qui fuerint, qui nos tam libere illuserunt perquiram.

*Mili.* Properemus pariter.

### SCENA DUODECIMA.

*Sifinnius, Milites, Hyrena.*

*Sifinn.* Hem! ignoro quid agam; perfundatus sum maleficiis Christicolarum. En montem circumeo, et semitam aliquoties repperiens, nec ascensum comprehendere, reditum quoque repetere.

*Mili.* Miris modis omnes illudimur, nimiaque

miaque lassitudine fatigamur. Et si, insanum caput! diutius vivere sustines, teipsum et nos perdes.

*Sifinn.* Quisquis es, meorum strenue, extende arcum, jace sagittam, perfode hanc maleficam.

*Mili.* Decet.

*Hyr.* Infelix erubescere! teque turpiter victum ingemisce; quia tenellæ infantiam virgunculæ absque armorum apparatu nequivisti superare.

*Sifinn.* Quicquid dedecoris accidit levius tolero, quia te morituram haud dubito.

*Hyr.* Hinc mihi quam maxime gaudendum, tibi vero dolendum, quia pro tui feveritate malignitatis in tartara damnaberis; ego autem, martyrii palmam virginitatisque receptura coronam, intrabo æthereum æterni regis thalamum—Cui est honor et gloria in secula!

FINIS DULCICII.

CALLI-

*CALLIMACHUS.*

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## ARGUMENTUM in CALLIMACHUM.

Resuscitatio Drusianæ et Callimachi, qui eam non solum vivam, sed etiam præ tristitia atque excæcatione illiciti amoris in domino mortuam, plus justo amavit; unde morfu serpentis male periit. Sed precibus Sancti Joannis apostoli una cum Drusiana resuscitatus, in Christo est renatus.

## INTERLOCUTORES.

CALLIMACHUS.

AMICI.

DRUSIANA.

ANDRONICUS.

SANCTUS JOANNES.

FORTUNATUS.

SCENA



## SCENA PRIMA.

*Callimachus, Amici.*

*Call.* **P**AUCIS vos, Amici, volo.

*Amic.* Utere, quantum libet, nostro colloquio!

*Call.* Si ægre non accipitis, malo vos interim sequestrari aliorum a colloquio.

*Amic.* Quod tibi videtur commodum, nobis est sequendum.

*Call.* Accedamus in secretiora loca, ne aliquis superveniens interrumpat dicenda!

*Amic.* Ut libet.

*Call.* Anxie, diuque gravem sustinui dolorem, quem vestro consilio relevari posse spero.

*Amic.* Æquum est ut communicata invicem compassione, patiamur quicquid unicuique nostrum utriusque eventu fortunæ ingeratur.

*Call.* O utinam voluissetis meam passionem compatiendo mecum partiri!

*Amic.*

*Amic.* Enuclea quid patiaris, et si res exigit, compatiemur: fin autem, animum tuum a nequam intentione revocare nitimur.

*Call.* Amo.

*Amic.* Quid?

*Call.* Rem pulcram, rem venustam!

*Amic.* Nec in solo, nec in omni: ideo atomum quod amas, per hoc nequimus intelligere.

*Call.* Mulierem.

*Amic.* Cum mulierem dixeris, omnes comprehendis.

*Call.* Non omnes æqualiter, sed unam specialiter.

*Amic.* Quod de subiecto dicitur, non nisi de subiecto aliquo cognoscitur: unde si velis nos enarithmum agnoscere dic primum usiam!

*Call.* Drusiana.

*Amic.* Andronici hujus principis conjugem?

*Call.* Ipsam.

*Amic.* Erras socie, est Iota baptisinate.

*Call.*

*Call.* Inde non curo, si ipsam ad mei amorem attrahere potero.

*Amic.* Non poteris.

*Call.* Cur diffiditis?

*Amic.* Quia rem difficilem petis.

*Call.* Num ego primus hujusmodi rem peto? et non multorum ad audendum provocatus sum exemplo?

*Amic.* Intende frater; ea ipsa, quam ardes, Sancti Joannis apostoli doctrinam secuta, totam se devovit Deo: in tantum ut nec ad thorum Andronici Christianissimi viri jam dudum potuit revocari; quo minus tuæ consentiet vanitati.

*Call.* Quæsi a vobis consolationem, sed incutitis mihi desperationem.

*Amic.* Qui simulat fallit, et qui profert adulationem vendit veritatem.

*Call.* Quia mihi vestrum auxilium subtrahitis, ipsam adibo, ejusque animo mei amorem blandimentis persuadebo.

*Amic.* Haud persuadebis.

*Call.* "Quippe vetar fatis."

*Amic.* Experiemur.

SCENA



## SCENA SECUNDA.

*Callimachus, Drusiana.*

*Call.* Sermo meus ad te, Drusiana, precordialis amor !

*Drus.* Quid mecum velis, Callimache, sermonibus agere vehementer admiror.

*Call.* Miraris ?

*Drus.* Satis.

*Call.* Primum de amore.

*Drus.* Quid, de amore ?

*Call.* Id scilicet quod te præ omnibus diligo.

*Drus.* Quæ vis consanguinitatis, quæve legalis conditio institutionis, compellit te ad mei amorem ?

*Call.* Tui pulcritudo.

*Drus.* Mea pulcritudo !

*Call.* Immo.

*Drus.* Quid ad te ?

*Call.* Proh dolor ! hætenus parum, sed spero, quod attineat postmodum.

*Drus.* Discede, discede, leno nefande !

Confunder

Confundor enim diutius tecum verba miscere;  
quem sentio plenum diabolica deceptione.

*Call.* Mea Drusiana, ne repellas te  
amantem, tuoque amorì cordetenus inhe-  
rentem; sed impende amorì vicem.

*Drus.* Lenocinia tua parvi pendo, tuique  
lasciviam fastidio, sed teipsum penitus  
sperno.

*Call.* Adhuc non repperi occasionem  
irascendi, quia quid mea in te agat dilectio  
forte erubescis fateri.

*Drus.* Nihil aliud, nisi indignationem.

*Call.* Credo te hanc sententiam mutatam  
ire.

*Drus.* Non mutabo pro certo.

*Call.* Forte.

*Drus.* O insensate et amens! cur falleris?  
cur te vacua spe illudis? quo pacto, qua  
dementia reris me tuæ cedere nugacitati,  
quæ per multum temporis a legalis thoro  
viri me abstinui.

*Call.* Proh Deum atque hominum fidem!  
si non consenseris, non quiescam, non de-  
sistam, donec te captionis circumveniam  
insidiis.

SCENA

## SCENA TERTIA.

*Drusiana sola.*

Eh! heu! Domine Jesu Christe! quid prodest castitatis professionem subiisse, cum is amens mea deceptus est specie? Intende Domine mei timorem, intende quem patior dolorem! Quid mihi! quid agendum sit ignoro. Si prodidero, civilis per me fiet discordia; si celavero, insidiis diabolicis sine te refragari nequeo. Jubeo me in te, Christe, ocius mori, ne fiam in ruinam delicato juveni.

## SCENA QUARTA.

*Andronicus, Joannes.*

*Andr.* Væ mihi infortunato! ex improvviso mortua est Drusiana! Curro, Sanctumque Joannem advoco.

*Joann.* Cur nimium contristaris, Andronice? Cur fluunt lacrimæ?

*Andr.*



*Andr.* Heu, heu! Domine! tædet vitæ propriæ.

*Joann.* Quid pateris?

*Andr.* Drusiana tui affeccla—

*Joann.* Estne hominem exuta?

*Andr.* Heu! est.

*Joann.* Multum disconvenit ut pro his fundantur lacrimæ, quorum animas credimus lætari in requie.

*Andr.* Non dubitem licet quin ut asseris anima æternaliter lætetur; corpusque quandoque incorruptum resuscitetur: hoc tamen me vehementer exurit, quod ipsa, me presente, mortem ut adveniret optando invitavit.

*Joann.* Agnostin' causam?

*Andr.* Agnovi, tibi que enucleam, si quando ex tristitia hac convalescam.

*Joann.* Accedamus, exequiasque diligenter celebremus.

*Andr.* Marmoreum in proximo sepulcrum habetur, in quod funus ponatur: servandique cura sepulcri Fortunato nostro relinquatur procuratori.

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*Joann.*

*Joann.* Decet ut tumuletur honorifice.  
Deus lætificet animam in requie.

## S C E N A   Q U I N T A.

*Callimachus, Fortunatus.*

*Call.* Quid fiet Fortunate, quia nec morte  
Drusianæ revocari possum ab amore.

*Fortun.* Miserabile !

*Call.* Pereo nisi me adjuvet tua industria.

*Fortun.* In quo possum adjuvare ?

*Call.* In eo; ut vel mortuam me facias  
videre.

*Fortun.* Corpus adhuc integrum manet,  
ut reor, quia non languore exesum sed levi  
ut experiebare febre est solutum.

*Call.* O! me felicem, si nunquam expe-  
rirer !

*Fortun.* Si placabis muneribus, dedam  
illud tuis usibus.

*Call.* Quæ in præsentī ad manus habeo  
interim accipe ; nec diffidas te multo maiora  
accepturum fore.

*Fortun.* Eamus cito.

*Call.* In me non erit mora.

S C E N A

## SCENA SEXTA.

*Fortunatus, Callimachus.*

*Fortun.* Ecce corpus nec facies cadaverosa,  
nec membra sunt tabida, utere ut libet.

*Call.* O Drusiana! Drusiana! quo affectu cordis te colui! qua sinceritate dilectionis te visceratenus amplexatus fui! Et tu semper abjecisti, meis votis contradixisti; nunc in mea situm est potestate quantis libet injuriis te velim laceffere.

*Fortun.* At, at horribilis serpens invadit nos.

*Call.* Hei mihi Fortunate! cur me decipisti? cur detestabile scelus persuasisti? En tu morieris serpentis vulnere, et ego commorior præ timore.

## SCENA SEPTIMA.

*Joannes, Andronicus, Deus.*

*Joann.* Accedamus, Andronice, ad tumultum Drusianæ, quo animam Christo commendamus prece.

R 2

*Andr.*



*Andr.* Hoc decet tui sanctitatem, ut non obliviscaris in te confidentem.

*Joann.* Ecce invisibilis Deus nobis apparet visibilis in pulcherrimi similitudine juvenis.

*Andr.* Expaveo.

*Joann.* Domine Jesu! cur juxta id loci dignatus es servis tuis manifestari?

*Deus.* Propter Drusianam, ejusque qui juxta sepulcrum illius jacet resurrectionem apparui, quia nomen meum in his debet gloriari.

*Andr.* Quam subito receptus est cœlo!

*Joann.* Ideo causam penitus non intelligo.

*Andr.* Maturemus gressum; forte experieris in perventione, quod asseris te minus intelligere.

## SCENA OCTAVA.

*Joannes, Andronicus, Callimachus.*

*Joann.* In nomine Christi, quid est hoc quod video miraculi? ecce aperto sepulcro corpus Drusianæ foras est abjectum, juxta quod jacent duo cadavera amplexu serpentis circumflexa.

*Andr.*

*Andr.* Conjecto quid significet: is ipse Callimachus Drusianam, dum viveret, illicitè amavit: quod illa ægre ferens in febrem præ tristitia incidit, et mortem, ut adveniret, invitavit.

*Joann.* Hoc amor castitatis coegit.

*Andr.* Post hujus occasum, hic amens infelicis languorem amoris, et negati tædium conglomerans sceleris, tabescebat animo, eoque magis desiderio æstuabat.

*Joann.* Miserabile!

*Andr.* Non ambigo quin hunc improbum servum mercede conduceret, quo illi patrandi occasionem facinoris preberet.

*Joann.* O nefas incomparabile!

*Andr.* Ideo ambo, ut video, morte sunt consumpti, ne effectum administrarent sceleri.

*Joann.* Nec injuria.

*Andr.* In hoc tamen illud est maxime admirandum; cur hujus, qui pravum voluit, resuscitatio, magis quam ejus qui consensit, divina sit voce prenunciata; nisi quia forte hic, carnali deceptus delectatione, deliquit ignorantia, iste autem sola malicia.

*Joan.* Quanta supernus arbiter districtione cunctorum facta examinat, quamque æqual lance singulorum merita pensat, id non obvium, nec cuiquam explicabile fore potest; quia divina subtilitas iudicii longe preterit humani sagacitatem ingenii.

*Andr.* Ideo admirando defecimus, quia rerum quæ geruntur causas, docte internoscere nequivimus.

*Joann.* Eventus post facta, docet persepe rerum discrimina.

*Andr.* Verum age jam, beate Joannes, quod acturus es! fac ut resuscitetur Callimachus, quo solvatur hujusmodi ambiguitatis nodus.

*Joann.* Reor prius invocato Christi nomine anguem perturbandum. Post vero Callimachum resuscitandum.

*Andr.* Recte reris, ne ultra lædatur morfu serpentis.

*Joann.* Discede ab hoc, crudelis bestia, quia serviturus est Christo!

*Andr.* Licet irrationale sit animal, haud surda tamen aure, quod jussisti, obaudivit.

*Joann.* Non meæ sed Christi virtuti paruit.

*Andr.*



*Andr.* Ideo citius dicto evanuit.

*Joann.* Deus incircumscripse et incomprehensibilis, simplex et inestimabilis; qui solus es id quod es, qui diversa duo socians ex hoc et hoc hominem fingis, eademque dissocians unum quod constabat resolvis; jube ut reducto halitu disjunctaque compagine rursus conliminata Callimachus refurgat, plenus ut fuit, hoc, quo ab omnibus magnificeris, qui solus miranda operaris.

*Andr.* Amen. Ecce vitales auras carpit, sed præ stupore adhuc quiescit.

*Joann.* Callimache, surge in Christi nomine! et utcunque se res habeat, confitere, quantilibet obnoxius sis viciis proferas, ne nos in modico lateat veritas.

*Call.* Negare nequeo quin patrandi causa facinoris accesserim; quia infelici languore tabescebam, nec illiciti æstum amoris compescere poteram.

*Joann.* Quæ dementia, quæ infania te decepit! ut castis presumeres fragmentis alicujus injuriam conferre dehonestatis.

*Call.* Propria stultitia, hujusque Fortunati fraudulenta deceptio.

*Joann.* Num triplici infortunio adeo infelix effectus es, ut nefas quod voluisti perficere posses?

*Call.* Nullatenus: licet non defuisset velle possibilitas, tamen omnino defuit posse.

*Joann.* Quo pacto impediēbaris?

*Call.* Ut primum distracto tegmine conviciis temptavi laceffere corpus exanime; iste Fortunatus, qui fomes mali et incentor extitit serpentinis perfusus venenis periit.

*Andr.* O factum bene!

*Call.* Mihi autem apparuit juvenis aspectu terribilis, qui detectum corpus honorifice textit; ex cujus flammea facie candentes in bustum scintillæ transiliebant, quarum una resiliens mihi in faciem ferebatur, simulque vox facta est dicens—"Callimache morere" "ut vivas"—his dictis expiravi.

*Joann.* Opus cœlestis gratiæ quæ non delectatur in impiorum perditione.

*Call.* Audisti miseriam meæ perditionis, noli elongare medelam tuæ miserationis.

*Joann.* Non elongabo.

*Call.* Nam nimium confundor, cordetenus contristor,

contristor, anxior, gemo, doleo, super gravi impietate mea.

*Joann.* Nec immerito: quippe grave delictum haud leve pœnitudinis expectat remedium.

*Call.* O utinam referarentur secreta meorum viscerum latibula, quo interim amaritudinem quam patior doloris perspiceres, et dolenti condoleres.

*Joann.* Congaudeo hujusmodi dolori, quia sentio te salubriter contristari.

*Call.* Tædet me prioris vitæ, tædet delectationis iniquæ.

*Joann.* Nec injuria.

*Call.* Pœnitet quæ deliqui.

*Joann.* Et merito.

*Call.* Displicet omne quod feci intantum ut nullus amor, nulla voluptas sit vivendi; nisi renatus in Christo merear in melius transmutari.

*Joann.* Non dubito quin superna gratia in te appareat.

*Call.* Ideo ne moreris, ne pigeris lassum erigere, merentem consolationibus attollere;  
quo



quo tuo monitu, tuo magisterio, a gentili in Christianum, a nugace in castum transmutatus virum, tuoque ducatu semitam arripiens veritatis, vivam juxta divinæ preconium promissionis.

*Joann.* Benedicta sit unica progenies divinitatis, idemque particeps nostræ fragilitatis, qui te fili Callimache parcendo occidit et occidendo revificavit, quo suum plasma mortis specie ab interitu liberaret animæ.

*Andr.* Res insolita omnique admiratione digna !

*Joann.* O Christe mundi redemptio, et peccatorum propitiatio, qualibus laudum preconiiis te talem celebrem ignoro ! expaveo tui benignam clementiam, et clementem patientiam ; qui peccantes nunc paterno more tolerando blandiris, nunc justa severitate castigando ad penitentiam cogis.

*Andr.* Laus ejus divinæ pietati !

*Joann.* Quis auderet credere, quisve presumeret sperare ; ut hunc, quem criminosis intentum viciis mors invenit, et inventum abstulit, tui miseratio ad vitam excitare, ad veni-

am dignaretur reparare? sit nomen tuum sanctum in secula benedictum qui solus facis stupenda mirabilia.

*Andr.* Eja! sancte Joannes, et me consolari ne tardes; nam conjugalis amor Drusianæ meam haud patitur mentem consistere, nisi et ipsam quantotius videam resurrectum ire.

*Joann.* Drusiana, resuscitet te Dominus Jesus Christus.

*Drus.* Laus et honor tibi, Christe, qui me fecisti reviviscere!

*Call.* Sospitatis auctori grates, qui te, mea Drusiana, resurgere dedit in lætitia, quæ gravi cum tristitia die fungebaris extrema.

*Drus.* Decet tui sanctitatem, venerande pater Joannes, ut resuscitato Callimacho qui me illicite amavit, et hunc resuscites, qui mei proditor funeris extitit.

*Call.* Ne dignum ducas, Christi apostole, hunc proditorem, hunc malefactorem a vinculis mortis absolvere, qui me decepit, me seduxit, meque ad audendum horribile facinus provocavit!

*Joann.*

*Joann.* Non debes illi invidere gratiam divinæ clementiæ.

*Call.* Non enim est dignus resurrectione, qui auctor extitit perditionis alienæ.

*Joann.* Lex nostræ religionis docet, ut homo homini dimittat, si ipse a Deo dimitti ambiat.

*Andr.* Justum.

*Joann.* Quando etiam Dei unigenitus, idemque virginis primogenitus, qui solus innocens, solus immaculatus, solus sine veterni sorde delicti in mundum venit; omnes sub gravi onere peccati depresso invenit.

*Andr.* Verum.

*Joann.* Scilicet nullum justum, nullum misericordia inveniret dignum: neminem tamen sprexit, neminem suæ gratia pietatis privavit; sed seipsum tradidit sui que dilectam animam pro omnibus posuit.

*Andr.* Si innocens non occideretur, nemo juste liberaretur.

*Joann.* Ideo in hominum non delectatur perditione, quos suo emptos meminit pretioso sanguine.

*Andr.*



*Andr.* Gratias illi.

*Joann.* Unde aliis Dei gratiam non debemus invidere, quam ex nullis precedentibus meritis in nobis gaudemus abundare.

*Call.* Terruisti me monitu.

*Joann.* Ne autem tuis videar reniti votis, non fuscitetur per me, sed per Drusianam: quia ad hoc implendum a Deo accepit gratiam.

*Drus.* Divina substantia quæ vere et singulariter es sine materia forma; quæ hominem ad tui imaginem plasmasti, et plasmato spiraculum vitæ inspirasti; jube materiale corpus Fortunati, reducto calore, in viventem animam iterum reformari: quo trina nostri resuscitatio tibi in laudem vertatur, Trinitas veneranda!

*Joann.* Amen.

*Drus.* Expergiscere Fortunate! et jussu Christi, retinacula mortis disrumpe.

*Fortun.* Quis me apprehensa manu erexit?  
Quis vocem ut resurgerem dedit?

*Joann.* Drusiana.

*Fortun.* Nam me fuscitavit Drusiana?

*Joann.* Ipsa.

*Fortun.*

*Fortun.* Nonne ante aliquot dies improvisa morte fuerat consumpta?

*Joann.* At vivit in Christo.

*Fortun.* Et cur manet Callimachus gravi vultu modestus? nec perfurit solito more in amore Drusianæ.

*Joann.* Quia a nequam intentione transmutatus, vere est Christi discipulus.

*Fortun.* Non!

*Joann.* Etiam.

*Fortun.* Si, ut asseris, me Drusiana suscitavit et Callimachus Christo credidit, vitam repudio, mortemque sponte eligo: quia malo non esse, quam in his tantam abundantem virtutum gratiam sentiscere.

*Joann.* O admiranda diaboli invidia! O malicia serpentis antiqui! qui et protoplastis mortem propinavit, et super justorum gloria semper gemit. Iste infelicissimus Fortunatus, diabolicæ amaritudinis felle plenissimus, comparatur malæ arbori amaros fructus facienti: unde excisus a collegio justorum, et abjectus a consortio timentium Deum, mittatur in æterni ignem supplicii, cruciandus sine alicujus intermixtione refrigerii.

*Andr.*

*Andr.* Ecce turgescuntibus serpentinis morfibus ad occasum rursus vergitur, et citius dicto morietur.

*Joann.* Moriatur, sitque incola Gehennæ, qui propter alieni invidiam profectus recusat vivere !

*Andr.* Terribile !

*Joann.* Nihil terribilius invido, nihil scelestius superbo.

*Andr.* Uterque miserabilis.

*Joann.* Una eademque persona utroque superlaborat vitio, quia neutrum sine altero.

*Andr.* Expone enucleatius.

*Joann.* Nam qui superbit invidet, et qui invidet superbit: quia mens invida dum alienam laudem nec patitur audire, et in sui comparatione perfectiores ambit vilescere, dedignatur subjeci dignioribus, et superbe conatur preferri comparibus.

*Andr.* Patet.

*Joann.* Unde iste miserrimus vulnerabatur mente, quia se his inferiorem estimare non sustinuit, in queis ampliorem Dei gratiam lucere non nescivit.

*Andr.* Nunc tandem intelligo quod inter  
furgentes



surgentes minime est computatus, quia ocus erat moriturus.

*Joann.* Dignus est enim utraque morte, quia et commendatum funus afficiebat injuria, et resurgentes injusto infectabatur odio.

*Andr.* Infelix est mortuus.

*Joann.* Recedamus, suumque diabolo filium relinquamus; nos autem diem istum et pro miranda Callimachi mutatione, et pro utriusque resurrectione, cum lætitia agamus; gratias ferentes Deo æquo judici secretorumque discretissimo cognitori, qui solus omnia subtiliter examinans, omnia recte disponens, unumquemque, juxta quod dignum prenoscit, præmiis suppliciiisque aptabit; ipsi soli honor, virtus, fortitudo, et victoria, laus, et jubilatio per infinita sæculorum sæcula! Amen.

FINIS CALLIMACHI.

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THE END.

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